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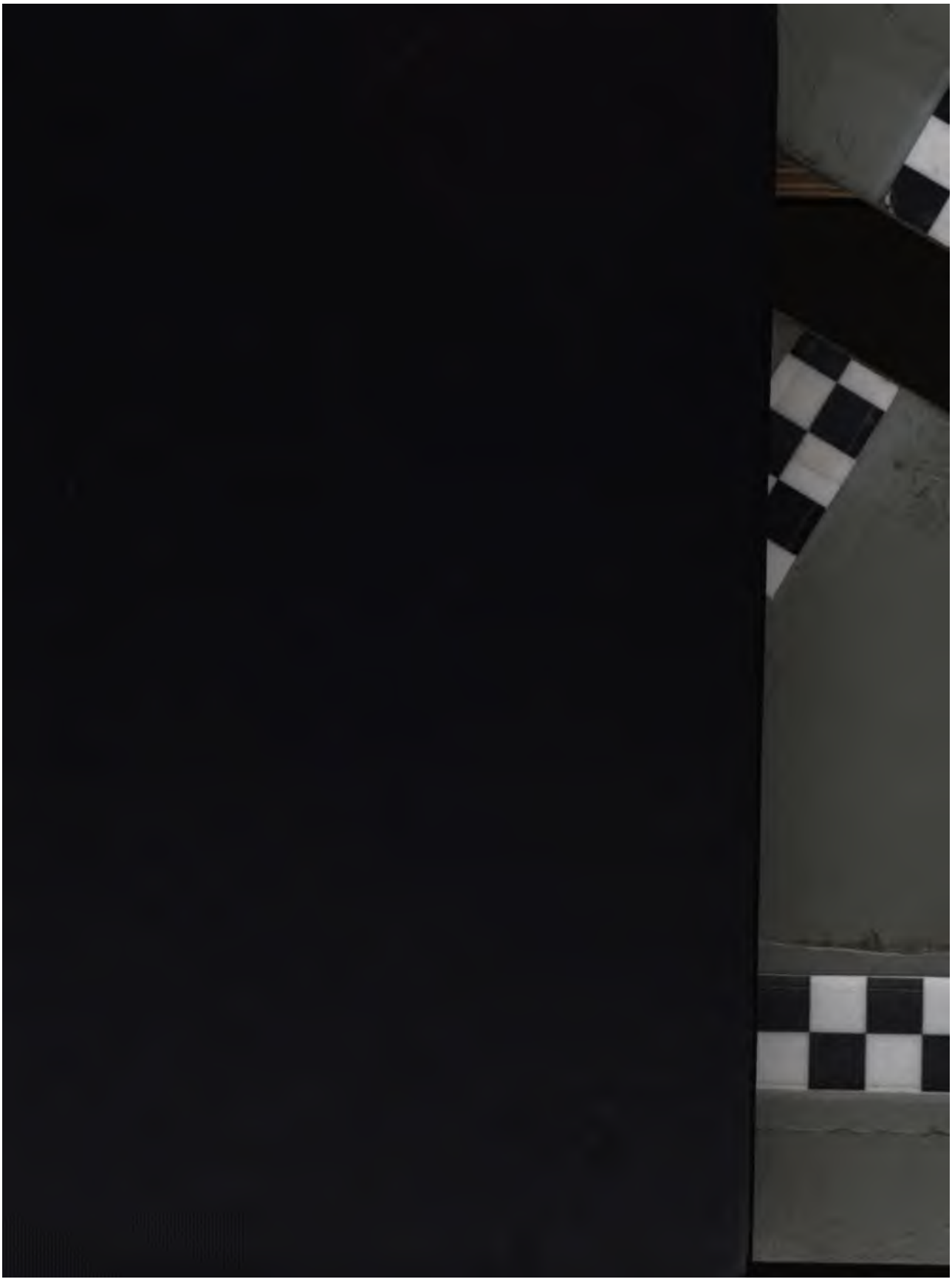

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SHORT STORIES

OF THE

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY OF LIFE

BY

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

VOL. XVI

ST. DUNSTAN SOCIETY
AKRON, OHIO

SJK

the very tips of the fingers, which overexcites the powers and faculties of physical sensation, from the simple contact of the hands down to that requirement which makes us commit so many follies.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not know whether you call love of the heart a love of the soul; whether sentimental idealism, Platonic love, in a word, can exist on this earth; I doubt it, myself. But that other love, sensual love, which has something good, a great deal of good about it, is really terrible in this climate. The heat, the burning atmosphere which makes you feverish, the suffocating blasts of wind from the south, waves of fire from the desert which is so near us, that oppressive sirocco which is more destructive and withering than fire, a perpetual conflagration of an entire continent, burned even to its stones by a fierce and devouring sun, inflame the blood, excite the flesh, and make brutes of us.

But to come to my story. I shall not dwell on the beginning of my stay in Africa. After visiting Bona, Constantine, Biskara, and Setif, I went to Bougie through the defiles of Chabet, by an excellent road cut through a large forest, which follows the sea at a height of six hundred feet above it and leads to that wonderful bay of Bougie, which is as beautiful as that of Naples, of Ajaccio, or of Douarnenez, which are the most lovely that I know of.

Far away in the distance, before one rounds the large inlet where the water is perfectly calm, one sees Bougie. It is built on the steep sides of a high hill covered with trees, and forms a white spot on that green slope; it might almost be taken for the foam of a cascade falling into the sea.

I had no sooner set foot in that small, delightful town, than I knew that I should stay for a long time. In all directions the eye rests on rugged, strangely shaped hilltops, so close together that you can hardly see the open sea, so that the gulf looks like a lake. The blue water is wonderfully transparent, and the azure sky, a deep azure, as if it had received two coats of color, expands its wonderful beauty above it. They seem to be looking at themselves in a glass, a veritable reflection of each other.

Bougie is a town of ruins, and on the quay is such a magnificent ruin that you might imagine you were at the opera. It is the old Saracen Gate, overgrown with ivy, and there are ruins in all directions on the hills round the town, fragments of Roman walls, bits of Saracen monuments, and remains of Arabic buildings.

I had taken a small, Moorish house, in the upper town. You know those dwellings, which have been described so often. They have no windows on the outside; but they are lighted from top to bottom by an inner court. On the first floor, they have a large, cool room, in which one spends the days, and a terrace on the roof, on which one spends the nights.

I at once fell in with the custom of all hot countries, that is to say, of taking a *siesta* after lunch. That is the hottest time in Africa, the time when one can scarcely breathe; when the streets, the fields, and the long, dazzling, white roads are deserted, when everyone is asleep, or at any rate, trying to sleep, attired as scantily as possible.

In my drawing-room, which had columns of Arabic architecture, I had placed a large, soft couch, covered

with a carpet from Djebel Amour. There, very nearly in the costume of Assan, I sought to rest, but I could not sleep, as I was tortured by continence. There are two forms of torture on this earth which I hope you will never know: the want of water, and the want of women, and I do not know which is the worst. In the desert, men would commit any infamy for the sake of a glass of clean, cold water, and what would one not do in some of the towns of the littoral for the companionship of a handsome woman? There is no lack of girls in Africa; on the contrary, they abound, but, to continue my comparison, they are as unwholesome as the muddy water in the pools of Sahara.

Well one day, when I was feeling more enervated than usual, I was trying in vain to close my eyes. My legs twitched as if they were being pricked, and I tossed about uneasily on my couch. At last, unable to bear it any longer, I got up and went out. It was a terribly hot day, in the middle of July, and the pavement was hot enough to bake bread on. My shirt, which was soaked with perspiration, clung to my body; on the horizon there was a slight, white vapor, which seemed to be palpable heat.

I went down to the sea, and circling the port, walked along the shore of the pretty bay where the baths are. There was nobody about, and nothing was stirring; not a sound of bird or of beast was to be heard, the very waves did not lap, and the sea appeared to be asleep in the sun.

Suddenly, behind one of the rocks, which were half covered by the silent water, I heard a slight movement. Turning round, I saw a tall, naked girl,

sitting up to her bosom in the water, taking a bath; no doubt she reckoned on being alone at that hot period of the day. Her head was turned toward the sea, and she was moving gently up and down, without seeing me.

Nothing could be more surprising than that picture of a beautiful woman in the water, which was as clear as crystal, under a blaze of light. She was a marvelously beautiful woman, tall, and modeled like a statue. She turned round, uttered a cry, and half swimming, half walking, hid herself altogether behind her rock. I knew she must necessarily come out, so I sat down on the beach and waited. Presently, she just showed her head, which was covered with thick black plaits of hair. She had a rather large mouth, with full lips, large, bold eyes, and her skin, which was tanned by the climate, looked like a piece of old, hard, polished ivory.

She called out to me: "Go away!" and her full voice, which corresponded to her strong build, had a guttural accent. As I did not move, she added: "It is not right of you to stop there, Monsieur." I did not move, however, and her head disappeared. Ten minutes passed, and then her hair, then her forehead, and then her eyes reappeared, but slowly and prudently, as if she were playing at hide-and-seek, and were looking to see who was near. This time she was furious, and called out: "You will make me catch a chill, for I shall not come out as long as you are there." Thereupon, I got up and went away, but not without looking round several times. When she thought I was far enough off, she came out of the water. Bending down and turning her back to me,

she disappeared in a cavity of the rock, behind a petticoat that was hanging up in front of it.

I went back the next day. She was bathing again, but she had a bathing costume and she began to laugh, and showed her white teeth. A week later we were friends, and in another week we were eager lovers. Her name was Marroca, and she pronounced it as if there were a dozen *rs* in it. She was the daughter of Spanish colonists, and had married a Frenchman, whose name was Pontabèze. He was in government employ, though I never exactly knew what his functions were. I found out that he was always very busy, and I did not care for anything else.

She then altered her time for having her bath, and came to my house every day, to take her *siesta* there. What a *siesta!* It could scarcely be called reposing! She was a splendid girl, of a somewhat animal but superb type. Her eyes were always glowing with passion; her half-open mouth, her sharp teeth, and even her smiles, had something ferociously loving about them; and her curious, long and conical breasts gave her whole body something of the animal, made her a sort of inferior yet magnificent being, a creature destined for unbridled love, and roused in me the idea of those ancient deities who gave expression to their tenderness on the grass and under the trees.

And then, her mind was as simple as two and two are four, and a sonorous laugh served her instead of thought.

Instinctively proud of her beauty, she hated the slightest covering, and ran and frisked about my

house with daring and unconscious immodesty. When she was at last overcome and worn out by her cries and movements, she used to sleep soundly and peacefully, while the overwhelming heat brought out minute spots of perspiration on her brown skin.

Sometimes she returned in the evening, when her husband was on duty somewhere, and we used to lie on the terrace, scarcely covered by some fine, gauzy, Oriental fabric. When the full moon lit up the town and the gulf, with its surrounding frame of hills, we saw on all the other terraces a recumbent army of silent phantoms, who would occasionally get up, change their places, and lie down again, in the languorous warmth of the starry night.

In spite of the brightness of African nights, Marroca would insist upon stripping herself almost naked in the clear rays of the moon; she did not trouble herself much about anybody who might see us, and often, in spite of my fears and entreaties, she uttered long, resounding cries, which made the dogs in the distance howl.

One night, when I was sleeping under the starry sky, she came and kneeled down on my carpet, and putting her lips, which curled slightly, close to my face, she said:

"You must come and stay at my house."

I did not understand her, and asked:

"What do you mean?"

"Yes, when my husband has gone away you most come and be with me."

I could not help laughing, and said: "Why, as you come here?"

And she went on, almost talking into my mouth, sending her hot breath into my throat, and moistening my mustache with her lips:

"I want it as a remembrance."

Still I did not grasp her meaning. Then she put her arms round my neck and said: "When you are no longer here, I shall think of it."

I was touched and amused at the same time and replied: "You must be mad. I would much rather stop here."

As a matter of fact, I have no liking for assignations under the conjugal roof; they are mouse-traps, in which the unwary are always caught. But she begged and prayed, and even cried, and at last said: "You shall see how I will love you there."

Her wish seemed so strange that I could not explain it to myself; but on thinking it over, I thought I could discern a profound hatred for her husband, the secret vengeance of a woman who takes a pleasure in deceiving him, and who, moreover, wishes to deceive him in his own house.

"Is your husband very unkind to you?" I asked her. She looked vexed, and said:

"Oh, no, he is very kind."

"But you are not fond of him?"

She looked at me with astonishment in her large eyes. "Indeed, I am very fond of him, very; but not so fond as I am of you."

I could not understand it all, and while I was trying to get at her meaning, she pressed one of those kisses, whose power she knew so well, on to my lips, and whispered: "But you will come, will you not?"

I resisted, however, and so she got up immediately, and went away; nor did she come back for a week. On the eighth day she came back, stopped gravely at the door of my bode, and said: "Are you coming to my house to-night? If you refuse, I shall go away."

Eight days is a very long time, my friend, and in Africa those eight days are as good as a month. "Yes," I said, and opened my arms, and she threw herself into them.

At night she waited for me in a neighboring street, and took me to their house, which was very small, and near the harbor. I first of all went through the kitchen, where they had their meals, and then into a very tidy, whitewashed room, with photographs on the walls and paper flowers under a glass case. Marroca seemed beside herself with pleasure, and she jumped about and said: "There, you are at home, now." And I certainly acted as though I were, though I felt rather embarrassed and somewhat uneasy.

Suddenly a loud knocking at the door made us start, and a man's voice called out: "Marroca, it is I."

She started: "My husband! Here, hide under the bed, quickly."

I was distractedly looking for my coat, but she gave me a push, and panted out: "Come along, come along."

I lay down flat on my stomach, and crept under the bed without a word, while she went into the kitchen. I heard her open a cupboard and then shut it again, and she came back into the room carrying

some object which I could not see, but which she quickly put down. Then, as her husband was getting impatient, she said, calmly: "I cannot find the matches." Suddenly she added: "Oh, here they are; I will come and let you in."

The man came in, and I could see nothing of him but his feet, which were enormous. If the rest of him was in proportion, he must have been a giant.

I heard kisses, a little pat on her naked flesh, and a laugh, and he said, in a strong Marseilles accent: "I forgot my purse, so I was obliged to come back; you were sound asleep, I suppose."

He went to the cupboard, and was a long time in finding what he wanted; and as Marroca had thrown herself on to the bed, as if she were tired out, he went up to her, and no doubt tried to caress her, for she flung a volley of angry *rs* at him. His feet were so close to me that I felt a stupid, inexplicable longing to catch hold of them, but I restrained myself. When he saw that he could not succeed in his wish, he got angry, and said: "You are not at all nice, to-night. Good-bye."

I heard another kiss, then the big feet turned, and I saw the nails in the soles of his shoes as he went into the next room, the front door was shut, and I was saved!

I came slowly out of my retreat, feeling rather humiliated, and while Marroca danced a jig round me, shouting with laughter, and clapping her hands, I threw myself heavily into a chair. But I jumped up with a bound, for I had sat down on something cold, and as I was no more dressed than my accomplice was, the contact made me start. I looked round. I

had sat down on a small ax, used for cutting wood, and as sharp as a knife. How had it got there? I had certainly not seen it when I went in; but Marroca seeing me jump up, nearly choked with laughter, and coughed with both hands on her sides.

I thought her amusement rather out of place; we had risked our lives stupidly, I still felt a cold shiver down my back, and I was rather hurt at her foolish laughter.

"Supposing your husband had seen me?" I said.

"There was no danger of that," she replied.

"What do you mean? No danger? That is a good joke! If he had stooped down, he must have seen me."

She did not laugh any more, she only looked at me with her large eyes, which were bright with merriment.

"He would not have stooped."

"Why?" I persisted. "Just suppose that he had let his hat fall, he would have been sure to pick it up, and then—I was well prepared to defend myself, in this costume!"

She put her two strong, round arms about my neck, and, lowering her voice, as she did when she said "I *adorre* you," she whispered:

"Then he would *never* have got up again."

I did not understand her, and said: "What do you mean?"

She gave me a cunning wink, and put out her hand to the chair on which I had sat down, and her outstretched hands, her smile, her half-open lips, her white, sharp, and ferocious teeth, all drew my attention to the little ax which was used for cutting

wood, the sharp blade of which was glistening in the candle-light. While she put out her hand as if she were going to take it, she put her left arm round me, and drawing me to her, and putting her lips against mine, with her right arm she made a motion as if she were cutting off the head of a kneeling man!

This, my friend, is the manner in which people here understand conjugal duties, love, and hospitality!

A PHILOSOPHER

BLÉROT had been my most intimate friend from childhood; we had no secrets from each other, and were united heart and soul by a brotherly intimacy and a boundless confidence in each other. I had been intrusted with the secret of all his love affairs, as he had been with mine.

When he told me that he was going to get married I was hurt, just as if he had been guilty of a treacherous act with regard to me. I felt that it must interfere with that cordial and absolute affection which had united us hitherto. His wife would come between us. The intimacy of the marriage-bed establishes a kind of complicity, a mysterious alliance between two persons, even when they have ceased to love each other. Man and wife are like two discreet partners who will not let anyone else into their secrets. But that close bond which the conjugal kiss fastens

is widely loosened on the day on which the woman takes a lover.

I remember Blérot's wedding as if it were but yesterday. I would not be present at the signing of the marriage contract, as I have no particular liking for such ceremonies. I only went to the civil wedding and to the church.

His wife, whom I had never seen before, was a tall, slight girl, with pale hair, pale cheeks, pale hands, and eyes to match. She walked with a slightly undulating motion, as if she were on board a ship, and seemed to advance with a succession of long, graceful courtesies.

Blérot seemed very much in love with her. He looked at her constantly, and I felt a shiver of an immoderate desire for her pass through my frame.

I went to see him in a few days, and he said to me :

"You do not know how happy I am ; I am madly in love with her ; but then she is—she is—" He did not finish his sentence, but he put the tips of his fingers to his lips with a gesture which signified "divine! delicious! perfect!" and a good deal more besides.

I asked, laughing, "What! all that?"

"Everything that you can imagine," was his answer.

He introduced me to her. She was very pleasant, on easy terms with me, as was natural, and begged me to look upon their house as my own. I felt that he, Blérot, did not belong to me any longer. Our intimacy was altogether checked, and we hardly found a word to say to each other.

I soon took my leave, and shortly afterward went to the East, returning by way of Russia, Germany, Sweden, and Holland, after an absence of eighteen months from Paris.

The morning after my arrival, as I was walking along the boulevards to breathe the air once more, I saw a pale man with sunken cheeks coming toward me, who was as much like Blérot as it was possible for a physical, emaciated man to resemble a strong, ruddy, rather stout man. I looked at him in surprise, and asked myself: "Can it possibly be he?" But he saw me, and came toward me with outstretched arms, and we embraced in the middle of the boulevard.

After we had gone up and down once or twice from the Rue Drouot to the Vaudeville Theatre, just as we were taking leave of each other, — for he already seemed quite done up with walking, — I said to him:

"You don't look at all well. Are you ill?"

"I do feel rather out of sorts," was all he said.

He looked like a man who was going to die, and I felt a flood of affection for my old friend, the only real one that I had ever had. I squeezed his hands.

"What is the matter with you? Are you in pain?"

"A little tired; but it is nothing."

"What does your doctor say?"

"He calls it anæmia, and has ordered me to eat no white meat and to take tincture of iron."

A suspicion flashed across me.

"Are you happy?" I asked him.

"Yes, very happy; my wife is charming, and I love her more than ever."

But I noticed that he grew rather red and seemed embarrassed, as if he was afraid of any further questions, so I took him by the arm and pushed him into a *café*, which was nearly empty at that time of day. I forced him to sit down, and looking him straight in the face, I said:

"Look here, old fellow, just tell me the exact truth."

"I have nothing to tell you," he stammered.

"That is not true," I replied, firmly. "You are ill, mentally perhaps, and you dare not reveal your secret to anyone. Something or other is doing you harm, and I mean you to tell me what it is. Come, I am waiting for you to begin."

Again he got very red, stammered, and turning his head away, he said:

"It is very idiotic—but I—I am done for!"

As he did not go on, I said:

"Just tell me what it is."

"Well, I have got a wife who is killing me, that is all," he said abruptly, almost desperately.

I did not understand at first. "Does she make you unhappy? How? What is it?"

"No," he replied in a low voice, as if he were confessing some crime; "I love her too much, that is all."

I was thunderstruck at this singular avowal, and then I felt inclined to laugh, but at length I managed to reply:

"But surely, at least so it seems to me, you might manage to—to love her a little less."

He had got very pale again, and at length made up his mind to speak to me openly, as he used to do formerly.

"No," he said, "that is impossible; and I am dying from it, I know; it is killing me, and I am really frightened. Some days, like to-day, I feel inclined to leave her, to go away altogether, to start for the other end of the world, so as to live for a long time; and then, when the evening comes, I return home in spite of myself, but slowly, and feeling uncomfortable. I go upstairs hesitatingly and ring, and when I go in I see her there sitting in her easy-chair, and she will say, 'How late you are,' I kiss her, and we sit down to dinner. During the meal I make this resolve: 'I will go directly it is over, and take the train for somewhere, no matter where'; but when we get back to the drawing-room I am so tired that I have not the courage to get up out of my chair, and so I remain, and then — and then — I succumb again."

I could not help smiling again. He saw it, and said: "You may laugh, but I assure you it is very horrible."

"Why don't you tell your wife?" I asked him. "Unless she be a regular monster she would understand."

He shrugged his shoulders. "It is all very well for you to talk. I don't tell her because I know her nature. Have you ever heard it said of certain women, 'She has just married a third time?' Well, and that makes you laugh like you did just now, and yet it is true. What is to be done? It is neither her fault nor mine. She is so, because nature has made her so; I assure you, my dear old friend, she has the

temperament of a Messalina. She does not know it, but I do; so much the worse for me. She is charming, gentle, tender, and thinks that our conjugal intercourse, which is wearing me out and killing me, is natural and quite moderate. She seems like an ignorant schoolgirl, and she really is ignorant, poor child.

"Every day I form energetic resolutions, for you must understand that I am dying. But one look of her eyes, one of those looks in which I can read the ardent desire of her lips, is enough for me, and I succumb at once, saying to myself: 'This is really the end; I will have no more of her death-giving kisses,' and then, when I have yielded again, like I have to-day, I go out and walk and walk, thinking of death, and saying to myself that I am lost, that all is over.

"I am mentally so ill that I went for a walk to Père Lachaise cemetery yesterday. I looked at all the graves, standing in a row like dominoes, and I thought to myself: 'I shall soon be there,' and then I returned home, quite determined to pretend to be ill, and so escape, but I could not.

"Oh! You don't know what it is. Ask a smoker who is poisoning himself with nicotine whether he can give up his delicious and deadly habit. He will tell you that he has tried a hundred times without success, and he will, perhaps, add: 'So much the worse, but I would rather die than go without tobacco.' That is just the case with me. When once one is in the clutches of such a passion or such a habit, one must give oneself up to it entirely."

He got up and gave me his hand. I felt seized with a tumult of rage, and with hatred for this woman, this careless, charming, terrible woman; and as he was buttoning up his coat to go out I said to him, brutally perhaps:

"But, in God's name, why don't you let her have a lover, rather than kill yourself like that?"

He shrugged his shoulders without replying, and went off.

For six months I did not see him. Every morning I expected a letter of invitation to his funeral, but I would not go to his house from a complicated feeling of contempt for him and for that woman; of anger, of indignation, of a thousand sensations.

One lovely spring morning I was walking in the Champs-Elysées. It was one of those warm days which make our eyes bright and stir up in us a tumultuous feeling of happiness from the mere sense of existence. Some one tapped me on the shoulder, and turning round I saw my old friend, looking well, stout, and rosy.

He gave me both hands, beaming with pleasure, and exclaimed:

"Here you are, you erratic individual!"

I looked at him, utterly thunderstruck.

"Well, on my word—yes. By Jove! I congratulate you; you have indeed changed in the last six months!"

He flushed scarlet, and said, with an embarrassed laugh:

"One can but do one's best."

I looked at him so obstinately that he evidently felt uncomfortable, so I went on:

"So—now—you are—completely cured?"

He stammered, hastily:

"Yes, perfectly, thank you." Then changing his tone, "How lucky that I should have come across you, old fellow. I hope we shall often meet now."

But I would not give up my idea; I wanted to know how matters really stood, so I asked:

"Don't you remember what you told me six months ago? I suppose—I—eh—suppose you resist now?"

"Please don't talk any more about it," he replied, uneasily; "forget that I mentioned it to you; leave me alone. But, you know, I have no intention of letting you go; you must come and dine at my house."

A sudden fancy took me to see for myself how matters stood, so that I might understand all about it, and I accepted.

His wife received me in a most charming manner, and she was, as a matter of fact, a most attractive woman. Her long hands, her neck, and cheeks were beautifully white and delicate, and marked her breeding, and her walk was undulating and delightful.

René gave her a brotherly kiss on the forehead and said:

"Has not Lucien come yet?"

"Not yet," she replied, in a clear, soft voice; "you know he is almost always rather late."

At that moment the bell rang, and a tall man was shown in. He was dark, with a thick beard, and looked like a modern Hercules. We were introduced to each other; his name was Lucien Delabarre.

René and he shook hands in a most friendly manner, and then we went to dinner.

It was a most enjoyable meal, without the least constraint. My old friend spoke with me constantly, in the old familiar cordial manner, just as he used to do. It was: "You know, old fellow!"—"I say, old fellow!"—"Just listen a moment, old fellow!" Suddenly he exclaimed:

"You don't know how glad I am to see you again; it takes me back to old times."

I looked at his wife and the other man. Their attitude was perfectly correct, though I fancied once or twice that they exchanged a rapid and furtive look.

As soon as dinner was over René turned to his wife, and said:

"My dear, I have just met Pierre again, and I am going to carry him off for a walk and a chat along the boulevards to remind us of old times. I am leaving you in very good company."

The young woman smiled, and said to me, as she shook hands with me:

"Don't keep him too long."

As we went along, arm-in-arm, I could not help saying to him, for I was determined to know how matters stood:

"What has happened? Do tell me!"

He, however, interrupted me roughly, and answered like a man who has been disturbed without any reason.

"Just look here, old fellow; leave one alone with your questions."

Then he added, half aloud, as if talking to himself:

"After all, it would have been too stupid to have let oneself go to perdition like that."

I did not press him. We walked on quickly and began to talk. All of a sudden he whispered in my ear:

"I say, suppose we go and have a bottle of 'fizz' with some girls! Eh?"

I could not prevent myself from laughing heartily.

"Just as you like; come along, let us go."

ALWAYS LOCK THE DOOR!

THE four glasses which were standing in front of the diners were still nearly half full, which is a sign, as a general rule, that the guests are quite so. They were beginning to speak without waiting for an answer; no one took any notice of anything except what was going on inside him, either in his mind or stomach; voices grew louder, gestures more animated, eyes brighter.

It was a bachelors' dinner of confirmed old celibates. They had instituted this regular banquet twenty years before, christening it "The Celibate," and at the time there were fourteen of them, all fully determined never to marry. Now there were only four of them left; three were dead and the other seven were married.

These four stuck firmly to it, and, as far as lay in their power, they scrupulously observed the rules which had been laid down at the beginning of their curious association. They had sworn, hand-in-hand, to turn aside every woman they could from the right path, and their friends' wives for choice, and more

especially those of their most intimate friends. For this reason, as soon as any of them left the society, in order to set up in domestic life for himself, he took care to quarrel definitely with all his former companions.

Besides this, they were pledged at every dinner to relate most minutely their last adventures, which had given rise to this familiar phrase among them: "To lie like an old bachelor."

They professed, moreover, the most profound contempt for woman, whom they talked of as an animal made solely for their pleasure. Every moment they quoted Schopenhauer, who was their god, and his well-known essay "On Women"; they wished that harems and towers might be reintroduced, and had the ancient maxim: "*Mulier, infans perpetuus,*" * woven into their table-linen, and below it, the line of Alfred de Vigny: "*La femme, enfant malade et douze fois impure.*" † So that by dint of despising women they lived only for them, while all their efforts and all their desires were directed toward them. Those of them who had married called them old fops, made fun of them, and — feared them.

When they began to feel the exhilarating effects of the champagne, the tales of their old bachelor experiences began.

On the day in question, these old fellows, for they were old by this time, and the older they grew the more extraordinary *good fortune* in the way of love affairs they had to relate, were quite talkative. For

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* Woman is a perpetual child.

† Woman, a sick child and twelve times as impure.

the last month, to hear them, each of them had played the gallant with at least one woman a day. And what women! the youngest, the noblest, the richest, and the most beautiful!

After they had finished their stories, one of them, he who had spoken first and had therefore been obliged to listen to all the others, rose and said:

"Now that we have finished drawing the long-bow, I should like to tell you, not my last, but my first adventure,—I mean the first adventure of my life, my first fall,—for it is a moral fall after all, in the arms of Venus. Oh! I am not going to tell you my first—what shall I call it?—my first appearance; certainly not. The leap over the first hedge (I am speaking figuratively) has nothing interesting about it. It is generally rather a disagreeable one, and one picks oneself up rather abashed, with one charming illusion the less, with a vague feeling of disappointment and sadness. That *realization* of love the first time one experiences it is rather repugnant; we had dreamed of it as being so different, so delicate, so refined. It leaves a physical and moral sense of disgust behind it, just as when one has happened to put one's hand on a toad. You may *rub* your hand as hard as you like, but the moral feeling remains.

"Yes! one very soon gets quite used to it; there is no doubt about that. For my part, however, I am very sorry it was not in my power to give the Creator the benefit of my advice when He was arranging these little matters. I wonder what *I* should have done? I am not quite sure, but I think, with the English savant, John Stuart Mill, I should have man-

aged differently; I should have found some more convenient and more poetical combination, yes — more poetical.

"I really think that the Creator showed Himself to be too much of a naturalist — too — what shall I say? His invention lacks poetry.

"However, what I am going to tell you is about my first woman of the world, the first woman in society I ever made love to. I beg your pardon, I ought to say the first woman of the world that ever triumphed over me. For at first it is *we* who allow ourselves to be taken, while, later on — well, then it is quite another matter.

"She was a friend of my mother, a charming woman in every way. When such women are chaste, it is generally from sheer stupidity, and when they are in love they are furiously so. And then — *we* are accused of corrupting *them!* Yes, yes, of course! With them it is always the rabbit that begins and never the sportsman. I know all about it; they don't seem to lure us, but they do it all the same, and do what they like with us, without it being noticed, and then they actually accuse us of having ruined them, dishonored them, humiliated them, and all the rest of it.

"The woman in question certainly had a great desire to be humiliated by me. She may have been about thirty-five, while I was scarcely two-and-twenty. I no more thought of dishonoring her than I did of turning Trappist. Well, one day when I was calling on her, and while I was looking at her dress with considerable astonishment, for she had on a morning wrapper which was open as wide as a church-door

when the bells are ringing for service, she took my hand and squeezed it—squeezed it, you know, as they will do at such moments—and said, with a deep, sigh, one of those sighs, you know, which come right from the bottom of the chest: 'Oh! don't look at me like that, child!' I got as red as a tomato, and felt more nervous than usual, naturally. I was very much inclined to bolt, but she held my hand tightly, and putting it on to her well-developed bust, she said: 'Just feel how my heart beats!' Of course it was beating, and I began to understand what was the matter, but I did not know what to do. I have changed considerably since then.

"As I remained standing there, with one hand on the soft covering of her heart, while I held my hat in the other, and continued to look at her with a confused, silly smile—a timid frightened smile—she suddenly drew back, and said in an irritated voice:

"'Young man, what are you doing? You are indecent and badly brought up.'

"You may be sure I took my hand away quickly, stopped smiling, and stammering out some excuse, got up and took my leave as if I had lost my head.

"But I was caught, and dreamed of her. I thought her charming, adorable; I fancied that I loved her, that I had always loved her, and I determined to see her again.

"When I saw her again she gave me a little smile like an actress might behind the scenes. Oh, how that little smile upset me! And she shook hands with a long, significant pressure.

"From that day it seems that I made love to her; at least, she declared afterward that I had ruined her,

captured her, dishonored her, with rare Machiavelism, with consummate cleverness, with the calculations of a mathematician, and the cunning of an Apache Indian.

"But one thing troubled me strangely: where was my triumph to be accomplished? I lived with my family, and on this point my family was most particular. I was not bold enough to venture into a hotel in broad daylight with a woman on my arm, and I did not know whom to ask for advice.

"Now, my fair friend had often said in joke that every young man ought to have a room for himself somewhere or other from home. We lived in Paris, and this was a sort of inspiration. I took a room, and she came. She came one day in November; I should have liked to put off her visit because I had no fire, and I had no fire because the chimney smoked. The very evening before I had spoken to my landlord, a retired shopkeeper, about it, and he had promised that he would send for the chimney-sweep in a day or two to get it all put to rights.

"As soon as she came in, I said:

"'There is no fire because my chimney smokes.'

"She did not even appear to hear me, but stammered: 'That does not matter, I have—'; and when I looked surprised, she stopped short in confusion, and went on: 'I don't know what I am saying; I am mad. I have lost my head. Oh! what am I doing? Why did I come? How unhappy I am! What a disgrace, what a disgrace!' And she threw herself sobbing into my arms.

"I thought that she really felt remorse, and swore that I would respect her. Then, however, she sank

down at my knees, sighing: 'But don't you see that I love you, that you have overcome me, that it seems as though you had thrown a charm over me?'

"Then I thought it was about time to show myself a man. But she trembled, got up, ran, and hid behind a wardrobe, crying out: 'Oh! don't look at me; no! no! If only you did not see me, if we were only in the dark! I am ashamed in the light. Cannot you imagine it? What a dreadful dream! Oh! this light, this light!'

"I rushed to the window; I closed the outside shutters, drew the curtains, and hung a coat over a ray of light that peeped in, and then, stretching out my hands so as not to fall over the chairs, with my heart beating, I groped for her, and found her.

"It was a fresh journey for the two of us then, feeling our way, with our hands united, toward the other corner where the sofa stood. I don't suppose we went straight, for first of all I knocked against the mantelpiece and then against a chest of drawers, before finding what we wanted. After we sat down I forgot everything, and we almost went to sleep in each other's arms.

"I was half dreaming; but in my dream I fancied that some one was calling me and crying for help; then I received a violent blow, and opened my eyes.

"'Oh——h!' The setting sun, magnificent and red, shone full into the room through the door, which was wide open. It seemed to look at us from the verge of the horizon, illuminating us both, especially my companion, who was screaming, struggling, and twisting, and trying with hands and feet to get under the sofa, while in the middle of the room stood my

landlord by the side of the *concierge** and a chimney-sweep, as black as the devil, who were looking at us with stupid eyes.

"I sprang up in a rage, ready to jump at his throat, and shouted:

"'What the deuce are you doing in my room?'

"The chimney-sweep laughed so that he let his brush fall on to the floor. The porter looked as if he were going to sink into the floor, and the landlord stammered:

"'But, Monsieur, it was—it was—about the chimney—the chimney, the chimney which—'

"'Go to the devil!' I roared. So he took off his hat, which he had kept on in his confusion, and said, in a confused but very civil manner:

"'I beg your pardon, Monsieur; if I had known, I should not have disturbed you; I should not have come. The *concierge* told me you had gone out. Pray excuse me.' And they all went out.

"Ever since that time I never draw the curtains, but am always very careful to lock the door first."

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* A porter who opens the front door, which is common to all the lodgers, and sees that it is closed at night.—[EDITOR.]

A MISTAKE

THAT day Boniface, the letter-carrier, found in leaving the post-office that his route would not be so long, and therefore felt a lively delight.

He had charge of the country around Vireville and, when he returned in the evening, he often found he had covered over twenty miles in his long march.

To-day the distribution would be easy; he could even stroll along a little and be home by three o'clock in the afternoon. What luck!

He went out along the Sennemare road and commenced his work. It was June, the month of verdure and flowers, the true month of the fields and meadows.

The man, in his blue blouse and black cap with red braid, crossed through bypaths, fields of millet, oats, and wheat, buried to the shoulders in their depths; and his head, moving along above the feathery waves, seemed to float upon a calm and verdant sea, which a light breeze caused to undulate gently.

He entered the farms through wooden gateways built on the slopes and shaded by two rows of beech-trees, greeted the farmer by name: "Good morning, M. Chicot," and passed him his newspaper, "The Little Norman."

The farmer would wipe his hand on his trousers, receive the paper and slide it into his pocket to read at his ease after the midday meal. The dogs, asleep in barrels under the drooping apple-trees, yapped with fury, pulling at their chains; but the carrier without turning, proceeded, at his military gait, stretching his long limbs, the left arm over his bag, the right manipulating his cane which marched, like himself, in a continuous, hurried fashion.

He distributed his printed matter and his letters in the hamlet of Sennemare, then set out across the fields with a paper for the tax-collector who lived in a little isolated house a quarter of a mile from the village.

He was a new collector, this M. Chapatis, arrived but the week before and lately married.

He took a Paris paper and, sometimes, carrier Boniface, when he had time, would take a look at it before delivering it at its destination.

Now, he opened his bag, took out the paper, slipped it out of its wrapper, unfolded it, and began to read while walking. The first page did not interest him; politics did not arouse him; the finance he always passed over, but the general facts of the day he read eagerly.

That day they were very exciting. He became so much interested in the story of a crime executed in a gamekeeper's lodge that he stopped in the middle

of a cloverfield to read it more slowly. The details were frightful. A woodcutter, in passing the forester's house the morning after, had noticed a little blood upon the sill as if some one had been bleeding from the nose. "The keeper must have killed a wolf last night," he thought; but coming nearer, he perceived that the door was left open and that the lock had been broken. Then, seized with fear, he ran to the village, notified the mayor, who took with him, as a re-enforcement, the keeper of fields and the schoolmaster; these four men returned together. They found the forester with his throat cut before the chimney-piece, his wife strangled on the bed, and their little daughter, aged six years, stifled under two mattresses.

Carrier Boniface became so wrought up over the thought of this assassination, whose horrible details had been revealed to him one by one, that he felt a weakness in his limbs and said aloud:

"Christopher! But some of the people in this world are brutes!"

Then he replaced the journal in its wrapper and went on, his head full of visions of the crime. He arrived shortly at M. Chapatis's. He opened the gate of the little garden and approached the house. It was of low construction, containing only one story and a mansard roof. It was at least five hundred feet from its nearest neighbor.

The carrier mounted the two front steps, placed his hand upon the knob, trying to open the door, but found it locked. Then he perceived that the shutters had not been opened, and that no one had come out that morning.

A feeling of alarm took possession of him, for M. Chapatis, since his arrival, had always been up rather early. It was then only ten minutes after seven, nearly an hour earlier than he usually got there. No matter. The tax-collector ought to be up before that.

He made a tour around the house, walking with much precaution, as if he himself might be in some danger. He noticed nothing suspicious except a man's footprints on a strawberry bed.

But suddenly he remained motionless as he was passing a window, powerless from fright. A groan came from the house.

He approached nearer and stepping over a border of thyme, glued his ear to the opening in order to hear better; assuredly some one was groaning. He could plainly hear long, dolorous sighs, a kind of rattle, a noise of struggle. Then the groans became louder, and oft repeated, finally being accentuated and changing into cries.

Then Boniface, no longer doubtful that a crime was being committed, took to his legs, recrossed the little garden, flew across the field and the meadow, running until he was out of breath, his bag shaking and hitting against his hip, and arrived gasping and in dismay at the door of the police headquarters.

Brigadier Malautour was mending a broken chair by means of some brads and a hammer. Gendarme Rauter held the damaged piece of furniture between his knees and placed a nail at the edge of the crack; then the Brigadier, chewing his mustache, his eyes round and moist with interest in his work, would pound,—blows which fell on the fingers of his subordinate.

When the letter-carrier perceived them, he cried out :

"Come quick ; some one is assassinating the tax-collector. Quick! Quick!"

The two men ceased their work and raised their heads, the astonished heads of people surprised and perplexed.

Boniface, seeing more surprise than haste, repeated:

"Quick! quick! the robbers are in the house. I heard the cries. There is no time to be lost."

The Brigadier, placing his hammer on the ground, remarked : "How was it you found out about this?"

The carrier answered : "I went to carry the paper and two letters when I noticed that the door was locked and that the collector had not been out. I walked around the house, trying to account for it, when suddenly, I heard some one groan, as if he were being strangled, as if his throat were being cut — and then I started as soon as I could to get you. There's no time to be lost."

The Brigadier arose, saying :

"And you didn't try to help any?"

The carrier, much frightened, replied :

"I was afraid that one was too small a number."

Then the Brigadier, convinced, said:

"Give me time to get into my uniform and I will follow you."

And he went into the building followed by his subordinate who carried the chair. They reappeared almost immediately and all three started, in quick, trained step, for the scene of the crime.

Arriving near the house, they slackened their pace through precaution, and the Brigadier drew his revol-

ver; then they went softly into the garden and approached the walls of the dwelling. There was nothing to indicate that the malefactors had gone away. The door remained locked, the windows closed.

"Let us wait for them," murmured the Brigadier.

But Boniface, palpitating with emotion, made them pass around to the other side and showed them an opening: "It is there," said he.

The Brigadier advanced alone and fixed his ear against the board. The two others waited, ready for anything, watching him closely.

He remained a long time motionless, listening. The better to bring his head near the wooden shutter, he had removed his three-cornered hat and held it in his right hand.

What did he hear? His face revealed nothing for some time, then, suddenly, his mustache rose at the corners, his cheeks took on folds as in a silent laugh, and, stepping over the border of thyme, he came toward the two men who were looking at him in a kind of stupor.

Walking along on the tips of his toes, he made the sign for them to follow, and when they came to the gate he advised Boniface to slip the paper and the letters under the door.

The amazed carrier obeyed with perfect docility.

"And now, back again," said the Brigadier.

When they had gone a little way, he turned to the letter-carrier with a jocose air, his eyes upturned and shining with fun, and said, in a bantering tone:

"Well, you are a rogue, you are!"

The old fellow asked: "Why? I heard something. I swear to you I heard something."

Then the Brigadier, no longer able to restrain himself, laughed aloud. He laughed to suffocation, his two hands holding his sides, doubling himself up, his eyes full of tears, and making frightful grimaces about the nose. Both of them were frightened to look at him.

As he could neither speak, nor cease laughing, nor make them understand, he made a gesture, a popular, meaning gesture. As they could not comprehend that either, he kept repeating it, motioning back always, with his head.

Finally, his subordinate caught the meaning suddenly, and in his turn broke into formidable laughter. The old fellow remained stupefied between these two men who were twisting themselves into all shapes.

The Brigadier, finally, became calm, and giving the old man a great tap on his waistcoat, like a jolly good fellow, he cried:

"What a farce! A holy farce! I shall record it as the Crime of Father Boniface!"

The carrier opened his enormous eyes, and repeated:

"I swear to you that I heard something."

The Brigadier began to laugh. His subordinate sat down on the grass beside the ditch and laughed at his ease.

"Ah! you heard something. And your wife, do you assassinate her that way, hey, you old joker?"

"My wife?"

And he stood reflecting a long time, then he continued:

"My wife. Yes, she bawls if I strike her—and bawls that are bawls, why? Was M. Chapatis beating his wife?"

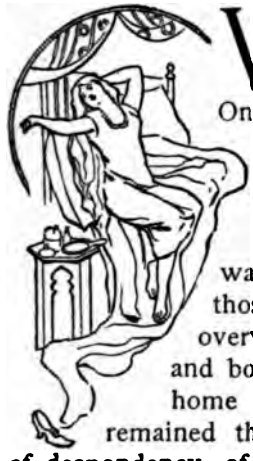
Then the Brigadier, in a delirium of humor, turned him around by the shoulders as if he had been a puppet and whispered in his ear something that caused him to look besotted with astonishment.

Then the old man murmured pensively:

"No?—not that—not that—she said nothing—mine—I would never have believed—is it possible?—one would swear that a murder—"

And, confused, disconcerted, and ashamed, he went on his way across the fields, while the two policemen, laughing continually and calling back to him from afar, with barrack-room wit, watched his black cap as it disappeared in the tranquil sea of grain.

FLORENTINE



WE WERE talking about girls, for what else is there to talk about, among men? One of us said:

"Wait! A strange story occurs to me on this subject."

And he related it:

"One evening of last winter, I was suddenly taken with one of those desolate lassitudes which are overwhelming in their attack upon soul and body, from time to time. I was at home alone, and I knew well that if I remained there I should have a frightful fit of despondency, of the kind that leads to suicide when they return often.

"I put on my overcoat and went out, without knowing at all what I was going to do. Having descended to the Boulevard, I began to walk along past the *cafés*, nearly empty, for it was raining. One of those thin rains was falling that dampens the spirits as much as the clothes; not one of those good

showers, striking one in a cascade and driving passers under the *porte-cochères* out of breath, but a rain so fine that one does not feel the drops, a humid rain that unceasingly deposits upon you imperceptible droplets and covers your clothing with a glistening, penetrating moisture.

"What should I do? I went up and returned, seeking some place to pass a couple of hours, and discovering, for the first time, that there was not a place of diversion in all Paris in the evening. Finally, I decided to enter the Folies-Bergères, that theater so amusing to street girls.

"There were very few in the great hall. The long, semicircular promenade contained but a few individuals, of a race usually known by their walk, their clothing, the cut of their hair and beard, their hats, and their complexion. It is not often that one sees among them a man who seems clean, perfectly clean, and whose clothing has altogether the same air. As for the girls they are always the same, as you know, plain, weary, drooping, walking with that quick step and that air of imbecile disdain which they assume, I know not why.

"I said to myself that truly not one of these flagging creatures, greasy rather than fat, either bloated or very thin, with the paunch of a prelate and their long legs bowed, was worth the louis that they obtained with much difficulty after having demanded five.

"But suddenly I perceived one of them, a little one that appeared genteel; not at all young, but fresh, droll, and provoking. I stopped her and, in beastly fashion, without thinking, set my price for the night.

I did not wish to return home alone, all alone; I preferred rather the company and embrace of this worthless woman.

"And so I followed her. She lived in a big, big house in Martyr street. The gas was already extinguished on the staircase. I mounted slowly, constantly lighting taper-matches, striking the steps with my feet, stumbling and ill at ease, following a petticoat, the rustle of which I heard before me.

"She stopped at the fourth story, and having shut again the inside door, she asked:

"'And you wish to remain until to-morrow?'

"'Yes. You know that was the agreement.'

"'All right, my dear, I only wanted to know. Wait for me here a minute, I will return immediately.'

"And she left me in the darkness. I heard her close two doors, then it seemed to me she was speaking with somebody. I was surprised and disturbed. The idea of blackmail occurred to me. But I have fists and solid muscles. 'We shall see,' thought I.

"I listened with all attention, both of ear and mind. Some one was moving, walking about, but with great precaution. Then another door was opened, and it seemed to me that I still heard talking, but in a very low voice.

"She returned, bringing a lighted candle. 'You can enter now,' she said.

"She spoke familiarly, as a sign of possession. I entered, and after having crossed a dining-room, where it was evident nobody ever dined, I entered a chamber like that of all these girls, a furnished room,

with rep curtains, and eider-down silk quilt with suspicious, poppy-red spots.

"She continued: 'Put yourself at ease, my dear.'

"I inspected the apartment with an eye of suspicion. There seemed nothing disquieting, however. She undressed herself so quickly that she was in bed before I had my overcoat off. Then she began to laugh:

"'Well, what is the matter with you? Are you changed into a pillar of salt? Come! Make haste!'

"I imitated her and joined her. Five minutes later I had a foolish desire to dress again and go out. But the overwhelming lassitude which had seized me at my house, returned to me, depriving me of all strength to move, and I remained, in spite of the disgust which I had for this public bed. The sensual charm which I believed I saw down there, under the lights of the theater, had disappeared in my arms, and I had with me, flesh to flesh, only a vulgar girl, like all the rest, whose indifferent and complaisant kiss had an after-taste of garlic.

"I began to talk to her:

"'Have you been here long?' said I.

"'Six months the fifteenth of January.'

"'Where were you before that?'

"'I was in Clauzel street. But the janitor made me so miserable that I left.'

"And she began to relate an interminable story of the *concierge* who had made some scandal about her.

"Suddenly I heard something moving near us. At first there was a sigh, then a light noise, but distinct, as if some one had fallen from a chair.

"I sat up quickly in bed and demanded: 'What was that noise?'

"She answered with assurance and composure: 'Don't disturb yourself, my dear, it is my neighbor. The partition is so thin that we hear all as if they were here. These are dirty boxes. They are made of pasteboard.'

"My indolence was so strong that I got down under the clothes again. We continued our talk. Incited by the curiosity which drives all men to question these creatures upon their first adventure, to wish to raise the veil from their first fault in order to find in them some far-off trace of innocence, that we may find something to love, perhaps, in the rapid recital evoked by their candor and the shame of long ago, I asked her about her first lover.

"I knew that she lied. What did it matter? Among all the lies I might discover, perhaps, some sincere or touching incident.

"'Come,' said I, 'tell me who he was.'

"'He was an oarsman.'

"'Ah! Tell me about it. Where were you?'

"'I was at Argenteuil.'

"'What were you doing there?'

"'I was maid in a restaurant.'

"'What restaurant?'

"'At the Freshwater Sailors, do you know it?'

"'Well, yes; Bonanfan's.'

"'Yes, that's the one.'

"'And how did he pay his court, this oarsman?"

"'While I was making his bed. He forced me.'

"But suddenly I recalled the theory of a doctor of my acquaintance, an observing, philosophic doctor

who, in his practice in a great hospital, had daily examples of these girl-mothers and public girls, and knew all the shame and misery of women, the poor women who become the hideous prey of the wandering male with money in his pocket.

"'Invariably,' he told me, 'is a girl debauched by a man of her own class and station in life. I have made volumes of observations upon it. It is customary to accuse the rich of culling the flower of innocence from the children of the people. That is not true. The rich pay for the culled bouquet. They cull also, but at the second flowering; they never cut the first.'

"Then turning toward my companion, I began to laugh:

"'You may as well know that I know all about your story. The oarsman was not the first, as you well know.'

"'Oh! yes, my dear, I swear it!'

"'You are lying.'

"'Oh! no, I promise you I am not.'

"'You lie. Come, tell me the truth.'

"She seemed to hesitate, astonished. I continued:

"'I am a sorcerer, my good child, a hypnotist. If you do not tell me the truth, I shall put you to sleep, and then I can find it out.

"She was afraid, being stupid like her kind. She murmured:

"'How did you ever guess it?'

"I replied: 'Come, speak.'

"'Oh! the first time, that amounted to nothing. It was at a festival in the country. They called in a chef for the occasion, Mr. Alexander. After he came

he had it all his own way in the house. He ordered everybody, even to the master and mistress, as if he had been a king. He was a large, handsome man who would not stay in place before his stove. He was always crying out: "Here, some butter — some eggs — some Madeira!" And it was necessary to carry him everything on the run, or he would get angry and say things to you that would make you blush under the skirts.

"'When the day was finished, he would smoke his pipe before the door. And, as I passed before him with a pile of plates, he said to me this: "Come, little goose, come down to the edge of the lake and show me the country." As for me, I went, like a fool; and scarcely had we arrived at the bank when he forced me so quickly that I did not even know that it was done. And then he went away by the nine o'clock train, and I never saw him again after that.'

"I asked: 'Is that all?'

"She stammered: 'Oh! I believe Florentine belongs to him.'

"'Who is Florentine?'

"'He is my little boy.'

"'Ah! very well. And you made the oarsman believe that he was the father, did you not?'

"'Yes.'

"'He had money, this oarsman?'

"'Yes, he left me an income of three hundred francs for Florentine's support.'

"I commenced to be amused. I continued:

"'Very well, my girl, very well. You are all less sensual than one would believe. And how old is Florentine now?'

"She answered: 'Twelve years old. He will take his first communion in the spring.'

"'That is good; and since that you have made a trade with your conscience.'

"She sighed resignedly: 'One must do what she can.'

"But a great noise in another part of the room made me leap out of bed with a bound; it was the noise of one falling, then rising and groping with his hands upon the wall. I had seized the candle and was looking about, frightened and furious. She got up also and tried to hold me back, saying:

"'It is nothing, my dear, I assure you it is nothing.'

"But I had discovered on which side of the wall this strange noise was. I went straight toward a concealed door at the head of the bed and opened it suddenly—and perceived there a poor little boy, trembling and staring at me with frightened eyes, a pale, thin little boy beside a large chair filled with straw, from which he had fallen.

"When he saw me, he began to cry and, opening his arms to his mother:

"'It was not my fault, mamma, it was not my fault. I was asleep and I fell. You mustn't scold me, for it was not my fault.'

"I turned toward the woman and said:

"'What does he mean?'

"She seemed confused and disheartened. But finally she said in a broken voice:

"'What can you expect? I do not earn enough to put the child in school! I must take care of him somehow, and I cannot afford to hire another room.

He sleeps with me when I have no one. When some one comes for an hour or two, he can stay in the closet very well and keep quiet; he knows how. But when one remains all night, as you have, his muscles are fatigued from sleeping on the chair — and it is not the child's fault. I would like to see you — you — sleep all night on a chair — you would sing another song —'

"She was angry, wrought up, and was crying.

"The child wept too. A poor child, pitiful and timid, a good child of the closet, of the cold, dark closet, a child who came from time to time to get a little warmth in the bed a moment empty.

"I, too, had a desire to weep.

"And I returned home to my own bed."

A STRANGE TRAFFIC

I AM reminded of this horrible story and this horrible woman by seeing at a watering-place much loved by the rich, a well-known Parisian lady, young, elegant, charming, adored and respected by everyone.

My story dates far back, but one never forgets these things. I had been invited by a friend to spend some time in his house in a small provincial town. In order to do me the honors, he took me to walk in every direction, showed me the much-praised peasants, the villas, the industries, and the ruins. He pointed out the monuments, the churches, the carved old gates, trees that were enormous or strange in form, the oak of Saint Andrew and the yew-tree of Roqueboise.

When I had examined all the curiosities of the country with enthusiastic delight, my friend declared, with a sorry countenance, that there was nothing more to be seen. I took a long breath. I should then be able to rest a little under the shadow of the trees. But suddenly he uttered a cry:

"Oh! yes, we have a mother of monsters; you must make her acquaintance without fail."

I asked: "Who is she, this mother of monsters?"

He replied:

"She is an abominable woman, a veritable demon, a being who brings into the world each year, voluntarily, a deformed, hideous, frightful infant, in short, a monster which she sells to exhibitors of phenomena.

"These atrocious dealers come from time to time to see if she has produced any new abortion and, if the object pleases them, to buy it, paying the mother a stated income.

"She has had eleven offshoots of this nature, and she is rich.

"You believe that I am joking, or that I am inventing or exaggerating. No, no, my friend. I am telling you the truth, the exact truth."

He took me into the suburbs. She lived in a pretty little house near the street. It was genteel and very well kept. The garden was full of fragrant flowers; one would have said that it was the residence of a retired notary.

A maid showed us into a kind of country parlor, and the miserable woman appeared. She seemed about forty years old. She was a large person, vigorous and healthy, with a hard countenance, the veritable type of robust peasant, half brute and half woman.

She understood the reproach that was put upon her and received all with a hateful humility. She asked:

"What is it you want, sirs?"

My friend replied: "I was told that your last infant was like any other, that it resembled in no way its brothers. I wished to be assured if this was true."

She cast a sullen, furious look at us and replied:

"Oh, no! oh, no! my poor sir! It is perhaps a little uglier still than the others. I had no chance, no chance. They are all alike, all alike my good sir. It seems hard on a poor woman alone in the world, a little hard, don't you think?"

She spoke quickly, with lowered eyes and the air of a hypocrite, or a ferocious beast when frightened. She softened the sharp tone of her voice, so that one could but be astonished at the flow of tearful words that came out in high treble from that great bony body, strong and angular, which seemed made for vehement gestures and hurling out sounds, after the fashion of wolves.

My friend asked: "Could we see your little one?"

She appeared to me to blush. Perhaps I was mistaken. After some moments of silence, she asked in a high voice:

"Of what use is it to you?" And she raised her head, looking straight at us, with fierce glances and fire in her eye.

My companion replied: "Why do you not wish to let us see it? There must be some people to whom you have shown it. You know whom I mean!"

She gave a start, and raising her voice and rising in anger she cried:

"That is what you have come for is it? To insult me, and for what reason? Because my children

are like beasts, you say! You shall not see it, no! no! Go away, now, go away! I know you; you all want to make trouble for me, don't you?"

She walked toward us, her hands on her hips. At the sound of her brutal voice, a kind of wail, or rather miauling, the lamentable cry of an idiot came from the next room. I shivered to the marrow. We recoiled before her.

My friend said in a severe tone: "Take care, Devil [they called her Devil among the people], take care, some day harm will overtake you!"

She trembled with fury, shaking her doubled-up fists and shouting:

"Go away, you! Why should it bring me harm? Go away, bunch of beggars!"

She was about to jump at our faces. We fled, with shriveled hearts. When we were outside the door, my friend said to me:

"Well, you have seen her! What have you to say of her?"

I replied: "Tell me the history of this brute."

And this is what he related to me, passing along the great white road, bordered with mulberry-trees, already harvested, through which a light wind passed, making them undulate like a calm sea:

"This girl was formerly a servant on a farm, and was strong, orderly, and economical. They never thought of her having a lover, or suspected her of weakness.

"She committed an error, as they all do, one evening in harvest time, among the sheafs, under a cloudy sky, when the air, heavy and lifeless, seemed

full of the heat of an oven, which soaked in sweat the brown bodies of the lads and girls.

"She soon found herself with child and was tortured with shame and fear. Wishing to conceal her misfortune at any cost, she bound her body violently by some system of her own, with some strong corset made of boards and cords. The more her form swelled under the effort of the growing child, the more she bound herself with this instrument of torture, suffering martyrdom, but courageous in her grief, not allowing anything to be seen or suspected.

"She maimed the little being in her body, cramping him with that frightful machine. She compressed and deformed him; she made a monster of him. His head was lengthened, coming to a point with two great eyes almost starting from the sockets. The limbs, pressed against the body, tortured like a tree with clinging vines, lengthened out of all proportion, terminated with fingers like those on the foot of a spider. The back remained round and small as a nut.

"She was confined in an open field one morning in spring. When the weeders that came to her aid saw the beast that she had brought forth, they cried in alarm and fled. And the rumor spread in the country that she had given birth to a demon. Since that time they have called her the Devil.

"She was driven from her place. She lived on charity, and perhaps on love under the shadow, for she was a pretty girl, and all men are not in fear of the lower regions.

"She brought up her monster that she hated with a savage hate, and which she would have strangled,

perhaps, had not the curate, foreseeing this crime, frightened her with threats of the law.

"Then one day, some showmen heard, in passing, about the frightful abortion and asked to see it in order to take it away if it pleased them. They were pleased and turning to the mother counted out five hundred francs. She, ashamed at first, had refused to let them see such an animal; but when she discovered that it was worth money, that it excited the greed of these people, she began to bargain and to discuss sou by sou, inciting them by reciting the deformities of her child, raising her price with the tenacity of a peasant.

"In order not to be robbed, she drew up a paper with them. And they bound themselves further to give her four hundred francs a year, when they had this beast in their service.

"This unexpected gain excited the mother, and the desire never left her of producing another phenomenon, in order to have an income of the middle class.

"As she was still young, she succeeded in her wish and became skillful, it appears, in varying the form of her monsters, according to the pressure that she subjected them to before birth.

"She had long and short ones, some that resembled crabs and some lizards. Many died and she was desolate.

"The law tried to intervene, but they could prove nothing. They then left her in peace to fabricate her phenomena.

"At this moment she possesses eleven living beings, which bring in, good years and bad, an in-

come of from five to six thousand francs a year. One alone is not yet placed, the one she was not willing to show us. But she will not keep it long, because she is known to-day by all the mountebanks of the world, and they come from time to time to see if she has anything new.

"She even asks for bids among them when there is any difficulty in settling a matter."

My friend was silent. A profound disgust rose in my heart, and a tumultuous anger and regret at not having strangled this beast when I had her under my hand. I asked: "But who is the father?"

He answered: "They do not know. He or they have a certain shame. He or they conceal themselves. Perhaps they share in the benefits."

I had not thought of this far-off adventure until the other day when I saw on a fashionable beach an elegant, charming, coquettish, much liked woman surrounded by men who respected her. I was walking along the shore, arm in arm with a friend, a physician of distinction. Ten minutes later I saw a nursemaid taking care of three children rolling in the sand.

A pair of little crutches lay on the ground and touched my sympathies. I then perceived that these three children were all deformed, humpbacked, crooked, and hideous. The doctor said to me:

"These are the product of that charming woman we just met."

A profound pity for her and for them entered my soul. I cried:

"Oh! the poor mother! How can she ever laugh again?"

My friend replied: "Do not pity her, my dear. It is the poor little ones that merit your pity. These are the result of preserving a good figure up to the last day. These monsters are the work of the corset. She well knows that she risks her life at that game. What does that matter, so long as she is beautiful and beloved!"

And then I recalled the other one, the country woman, the Devil who sold her phenomena.

CONSIDERATION

SIMON BOMBARD often found life very bad! He was born with an unbelievable aptitude for doing nothing and with an immoderate desire to follow this vocation. All effort, whether moral or physical, each movement accomplished for a purpose, appeared to him beyond his strength. As soon as he heard anyone speak of anything serious he became confused, his mind being incapable of tension or even attention.

The son of a novelty merchant of Caen, he glided along smoothly, as they said in the family, until he was twenty-five years of age. But as his parents were always nearer bankruptcy than fortune, he suffered greatly for want of money.

He was a tall, large, pretty youth with red whiskers, worn Norman fashion, of florid complexion, blue eyes, sensual and gay, corpulence already apparent, and dressed with the swagger elegance of a provincial at a festival. He laughed, cried, and gesticulated at the same time, displaying a storm of good nature with all the assurance of the seasoned traveler. He considered that life was made principally for joys

and pleasures, and as soon as it became necessary to curb his noisy enjoyment, he fell into a kind of chronic somnolence, being incapable of sadness.

His need of money harassed him until he formed the habit of repeating a phrase now celebrated in his circle of acquaintance: "For ten thousand francs a year, I would become an executioner."

Now, he went each year to Trouville to pass two weeks. He called this "spending the season." He would install himself at the house of his cousins who gave him the use of a room, and from the day of his arrival to that of his departure he would promenade along the board walk which extends along the great stretch of seashore.

He walked with an air of confidence, his hands in his pockets or crossed behind his back, always clothed in ample garments, with light waistcoats and showy cravats, his hat somewhat over his ear and a cheap cigar in one corner of his mouth.

He went along, brushing by the elegantly dressed women and eying contemptuously the merry men who were ready to make a disturbance for the sake of it, and seeking—seeking—what he was seeking.

He was after a wife, counting entirely upon his face and his physique. He said to himself: "Why the devil, in all the crowd that comes here, should I not be able to find my fate?" And he hunted with the scent of a dog in the chase, with the Norman scent, sure that he should recognize her, the woman who would make him rich, the moment he perceived her.

It was one Monday morning that he murmured: "Wait! wait! wait!" The weather was superb, one

of those yellow and blue days of the month of July, when one might say that the sky wept from the heat. The vast shore covered with people, costumes, colors, had the air of a garden of women; and the fishing boats with their brown sails, almost immovable upon the blue water which reflected them upside down, seemed asleep under the great sun at ten o'clock in the morning. There they remained, opposite the wooden pier, some near, some further off, some still further, as if overcome by a summer day idleness, too indifferent to seek the high sea or even to return to port. And down there one could vaguely perceive in the mist the coast of Havre, showing two white points on its summit, the lighthouses of Sainte-Adresse.

He said to himself: "Wait, wait, wait!" For he had passed her now for the third time and perceived that she had noticed him, this mature woman, experienced and courageous, who was making a bid for his attention. He had noticed her before on the days preceding, because she seemed also in quest of some one. She was an Englishwoman, rather tall, a little thin, an audacious Englishwoman whom circumstances and much journeying had made a kind of man. Not bad, on the whole, walking along slowly with short steps, soberly and simply clothed, but wearing a queer sort of hat as Englishwomen always do. She had rather pretty eyes, high cheek-bones, a little red, teeth that were too long and always visible.

When he came to the pier, he returned upon his steps to see if she would meet him again. He met her and she threw him a knowing glance, a glance which seemed to say: "Here I am!"

But how should he speak to her? He returned a fifth time, and when he was again face to face with her she dropped her umbrella. He threw himself forward, picked it up and presented it to her, saying:

"Permit me, Madame —"

She responded: "Oh, you are very kind!"

And then they looked at each other. They knew nothing more to say. But she blushed. Then becoming courageous, he said:

"We are having beautiful weather here."

And she answered: "Oh, delicious!"

And then they remained opposite each other embarrassed, neither thinking of going away. It was she who finally had the audacity to ask: "Have you been about here long?"

He answered laughing: "Oh! yes, about as long as I care about it." Then brusquely he proposed: "Would you like to go down to the pier? It is pretty there such days as this."

She simply said: "I should be much pleased."

And they walked along side by side, she with her harsh, direct allurement, he alluring her with his dandyism, which makes for rakishness later on.

Three months later the notables in the commercial world of Caen received one morning a square white card which said:

> *"Mr. and Mrs. Prosper Bombard have the honor to announce the marriage of their son, Mr. Simon Bombard, to Mrs. Kate Robertson."*

and on the other side:

> *"Mrs. Kate Robertson has the honor of announcing her marriage to Mr. Simon Bombard."*

They went to live in Paris. The fortune of the wife amounted to fifteen thousand francs a year income, free and clear. Simon wished to have four hundred francs a month for his personal expenses. He had to prove that his tenderness merited this amount; he did prove it easily and obtained what he asked for.

At first everything went well. Young Mrs. Bombard was no longer young, assuredly, and her freshness had undergone some wear; but she had a way of exacting things which made it impossible for anyone to refuse her. She would say, with her grave, willful, English accent: "Oh! Simon, now we must go to bed," which made Simon start toward the bed like a dog that had been ordered, "To your kennel." And she knew how to have her way by day and night, in a manner there was no resisting.

She did not get angry; she made no scenes; she never cried; she never had the appearance of being irritated or hurt, or even disturbed. She knew how to talk, that was all; and she spoke to the point, and in a tone that admitted no contradiction.

More than once Simon was on the point of rebelling; but before the brief and imperious desires of this singular woman he found himself unable to stand out. Nevertheless, when the conjugal kisses began to be meager and monotonous, and he had in his pocket what would bring to him something greater, he paid for satiety, but with a thousand precautions.

Mrs. Bombard perceived all this, without his surmising it; and one evening she announced to him that she had rented a house at Mantes where they would live in the future.

Then existence became harder. He tried various kinds of diversion which did not at all compensate for the conquests he had a taste for.

He fished with a line, learned how to tell the places which the gudgeon liked, which the roach and carp preferred, the favorite spots of the bream and the kinds of bait that divers fishes will take.

But in watching his bob as it trembled on the surface of the water, other visions haunted his mind. Then he became the friend of the chief of the office of the subprefect and the captain of the police; and they played whist of evenings, at the Commerce *café;* but his sorrowful eye would disrobe the queen of clubs, or the lady of the diamonds, while the problem of the absent legs on these two-headed figures would bring up images suddenly that confused his thoughts.

Then he conceived a plan, a true Norman plan of deceit. He would have his wife take a maid who would be a convenience to him; not a beautiful girl, a coquette, adorned and showy, but a gawky woman, rough and strong-backed, who would not arouse suspicions and whom he would acquaint beforehand with his plans.

She was recommended to them by the director of the city farm, his accomplice and obliging friend, who guaranteed her under all relations and conditions. And Mrs. Bombard accepted with confidence the treasure they brought to her.

Simon was happy, happy with precaution, with fear, and with unbelievable difficulties. He could never undress beyond the watchful eye of his wife, except for a few short moments from time to time,

and then without tranquillity. He sought some plan, some stratagem, and he ended by finding one that suited him perfectly.

Mrs. Bombard, who had nothing to do, retired early, while Bombard, who played whist at the Commerce *café*, returned each evening at half past nine, exactly. He got Victorine to wait for him in the passageway of his house, under the vestibule steps, in the darkness.

He only had five minutes or more for he was always in fear of a surprise; but five minutes from time to time sufficed for his ardor, and he slid a louis into the servant's hand, for he was generous in his pleasures, and she would quickly remount to her garret.

And he laughed, he triumphed all alone, and repeated aloud, like King Midas's barber fishing for the gold-fish from the reeds on the river bank: "The mistress is safe within."

And the happiness of having Mrs. Bombard safely fixed within made up for him in great part for the imperfection and incompleteness of his conquest.

One evening he found Victorine waiting for him as was her custom, but she appeared to him more lively, more animated than usual, and he remained perhaps ten minutes in the rendezvous in the corridor.

When he entered the conjugal chamber, Mrs. Bombard was not there. He felt a cold chill run down his back and sunk into a chair, tortured with fear.

She appeared with a candlestick in her hand. He asked trembling:

"You have been out?"

She answered quietly: "I went to the kitchen for a glass of water."

He forced himself to calm his suspicions of what she might have heard; but she seemed tranquil, happy, confident, and he was reassured.

When they entered the dining-room for breakfast the next morning, Victorine put the cutlets on the table. As she turned to go out, Mrs. Bombard handed her a louis which she held up delicately between her two fingers, and said to her, with her calm, serious accent:

"Wait, my girl, here are twenty francs which I deprived you of last night. I wish to give them to you."

And the girl, amazed, took the piece of gold which she looked at with a stupid air, while Bombard, frightened, opened his eyes wide at his wife.

WOMAN'S WILES

"WOMEN?"

"Well, what do you say about women?"

"Well, there are no conjurors more subtle in taking us in at every available opportunity with or without reason, often for the sole pleasure of playing tricks on us. And they play these tricks with incredible simplicity, astonishing audacity, unparalleled ingenuity. They play tricks from morning till night, and they all do it — the most virtuous, the most upright, the most sensible of them. You may add that sometimes they are to some extent driven to do these things. Man has always idiotic fits of obstinacy and tyrannical desires. A husband is continually giving ridiculous orders in his own house. He is full of caprices; his wife plays on them even while she makes use of them for the purpose of deception. She persuades him that a thing costs so much because he would kick up a row if its price were higher. And she always extricates herself from the difficulty cun-

ningly by means so simple and so sly that we gape with amazement when by chance we discover them. We say to ourselves in a stupefied state of mind, 'How is it we did not see this till now?'"

* * * * * * *

The man who uttered the words was an ex-Minister of the Empire, the Comte de L ——, a thorough profligate, it was said, and a very accomplished gentleman. A group of young men were listening to him.

He went on:

"I was outwitted by an ordinary uneducated woman in a comic and thorough-going fashion. I will tell you about it for your instruction.

"I was at the time Minister for Foreign Affairs, and I was in the habit of taking a long walk every morning in the Champs-Elysées. It was the month of May; I walked along, sniffing in eagerly that sweet odor of budding leaves.

"Ere long, I noticed that I used to meet every day a charming little woman, one of those marvelous, graceful creatures, who bear the trade-mark of Paris. Pretty? Well, yes and no. Well-made? No, better than that: her waist was too slight, her shoulders too narrow, her breast too full, no doubt; but I prefer those exquisite human dolls to that great statuesque corpse, the Venus of Milo.

"And then this sort of woman trots along in an incomparable fashion, and the very rustle of her skirt fills the marrow of your bones with desire. She seemed to give me a side-glance as she passed me. But these women give you all sorts of looks—you never can tell—

"One morning I saw her sitting on a bench with an open book between her hands. I came across, and sat down beside her. Five minutes later, we were friends. Then, each day, after the smiling salutation: 'Good day, Madame,' 'Good day, Monsieur,' we begin to chat. She told me that she was the wife of a government clerk, that her life was a sad one, that in it pleasures were few and cares numerous, and a thousand other things.

"I told her who I was, partly through thoughtlessness, and partly perhaps through vanity. She pretended to be much astonished.

"Next day she called at the Ministry to see me; and she came again there so often that the ushers, having their attention drawn to her appearance, used to whisper to one another, as soon as they saw her, the name with which they had christened her: 'Madame Léon'—that is my Christian name.

"For three months I saw her every morning without growing tired of her for a second, so well was she able incessantly to give variety and piquancy to her physical attractiveness. But one day I saw that her eyes were bloodshot and glowing with suppressed tears, that she could scarcely speak, so much was she preoccupied with secret troubles.

"I begged of her, I implored of her, to tell me what was the cause of her agitation.

"She faltered out, at length, with a shudder: 'I am—I am *enceinte!*'

"And she burst out sobbing. Oh! I made a dreadful grimace, and I have no doubt I turned pale, as men generally do at hearing such a piece of news. You cannot conceive what an unpleasant stab you feel

in your breast at the announcement of an unexpected paternity of this kind. But you are sure to know it sooner or later. So, in my turn, I gasped: 'But—but—you are married, are you not?'

"She answered: 'Yes, but my husband has been away in Italy for the last two months and he will not be back for some time.'

"I was determined at any cost to get out of my responsibility.

"I said: 'You must go and join him immediately.'

"She reddened to her very temples, and with downcast eyes, murmured: 'Yes—but—' She either dared not or would not finish the sentence.

"I understood, and I prudently inclosed her in an envelope the expenses of the journey.

* * * * * * *

"Eight days later, she sent me a letter from Genoa. The following week I received one from Florence. Then letters reached me from Leghorn, Rome, and Naples.

"She said to me:

"'I am in good health, my dear love, but I am looking frightful. I would not care to have you see me till it is all over; you would not love me. My husband suspects nothing. As his business in this country will require him to stay there much longer. I will not return to France until after my confinement.'

"And, at the end of about eight months, I received from Venice these few words:

"'It is a boy.'

"Some time after she suddenly entered my study one morning, fresher and prettier than ever,

and flung herself into my arms. And our former connection was renewed.

"I left the Ministry, and she came to live in my house in the Rue de Grenelle. She often spoke to me about the child, but I scarcely listened to what she said about it; it did not concern me. Now and then I placed a rather large sum of money in her hand, saying: 'Put that by for him.'

"Two more years glided by; and she was more and more eager to tell me some news about the youngster—'about Léon.'

"Sometimes she would say in the midst of tears: 'You don't care about him; you don't even wish to see him. If you could know what grief you cause me!'

"At last I was so much harassed by her that I promised, one day, to go, next morning, to the Champs-Elysées when she took the child there for an airing.

"But at the moment when I was leaving the house, I was stopped by a sudden apprehension. Man is weak and foolish. What if I were to get fond of this tiny being of whom I was the father—my son?

"I had my hat on my head, my gloves in my hands. I flung down the gloves on my desk, and my hat on a chair:

"'No, decidedly I will not go; it is wiser not to go.'

"My door flew open. My brother entered the room. He handed me an anonymous letter he had received that morning:

"'Warn the Comte de L——, your brother, that the little woman of the Rue Casette is impudently laughing at him. Let him make some inquiries about her.'

"I had never told anybody about this intrigue, and I now told my brother the history of it from the beginning to the end. I added:

"'For my part, I don't want to trouble myself any further about the matter; but will you, like a good fellow, go and find out what you can about her?'

"When my brother had left me, I said to myself: 'In what way can she have deceived me? She has other lovers? What does it matter to me? She is young, fresh, and pretty; I ask nothing more from her. She seems to love me, and as a matter of fact, she does not cost me much. Really, I don't understand this business.'

"My brother speedily returned. He had learned from the police all that was to be known about her husband: A clerk in the Home Department, of regular habits and good repute, and, moreover, a thinking man, but married to a very pretty woman, whose expenses seemed somewhat extravagant for her modest position. That was all.

"Now, my brother, having sought for her at her residence, and finding that she was gone out, succeeded, with the assistance of a little gold, in making the doorkeeper chatter: 'Madame D——, a very worthy woman, and her husband a very worthy man, not proud, not rich, but generous.'

"My brother asked, for the sake of saying something:

"'How old is her little boy now?'

"'Why, she has not got any little boy, Monsieur.'

"'What? Little Léon?'

"'No, Monsieur, you are making a mistake.'

"'I mean the child she had while she was in Italy two years ago?'

"'She has never been in Italy, Monsieur; she has not quitted the house she is living in for the last five years.'

"My brother, in astonishment, questioned the doorkeeper anew, and then he pushed his investigation of the matter further. No child, no journey.

"I was prodigiously astonished, but without clearly understanding the final meaning of this comedy.

"'I want,' said I to him, 'to have my mind perfectly clear about the affair. I will ask her to come here to-morrow. You shall receive her instead of me. If she has deceived me, you will hand her these ten thousand francs, and I will never see her again. In fact, I am beginning to find I have had enough of her.'

"Would you believe it? I had been grieved the night before because I had a child by this woman; and I was now irritated, ashamed, wounded at having no more of her. I found myself free, released from all responsibility, from all anxiety; and yet I felt myself raging at the position in which I was placed.

"Next morning my brother awaited her in my study. She came in as quickly as usual, rushing toward him with outstretched arms, but when she saw who it was she at once drew back.

"He bowed, and excused himself.

"'I beg your pardon, Madame, for being here instead of my brother; but he has authorized me to ask you for some explanations which he would find it painful to seek from you himself.'

"Then, fixing on her face a searching glance, he said abruptly:

"'We know you have not a child by him.'

"After the first moment of stupor, she regained her composure, took a seat, and gazed with a smile at this man who was sitting in judgment on her.

"She answered simply:

"'No; I have no child.'

"'We know also that you have never been in Italy.'

"This time she burst out laughing in earnest.

"'No; I have never been in Italy.'

"My brother, quite stunned, went on:

"'The Comte has requested me to give you this money, and to tell you that it is all broken off.'

"She became serious again, calmly putting the money into her pocket, and, in an ingenuous tone, asked:

"'And I am not, then, to see the Comte any more?'

"'No, Madame.'

"She appeared to be annoyed, and in a passionless voice she said:

"'So much the worse; I was very fond of him.'

"Seeing that she had made up her mind on the subject so resolutely, my brother, smiling in his turn, said to her:

"'Look here, now, tell me why you invented all this long, tricky yarn, complicating it by bringing in the sham journey to Italy and the child?'

"She gazed at my brother in amazement, as if he had asked her a stupid question, and replied:

"'Well, I declare! How spiteful you are! Do you

believe a poor little woman of the people such as I am—nothing at all—could have for three years kept on my hands the Comte de L——, Minister, a great personage, a man of fashion, wealthy, and seductive, if she had not taken a little trouble about it? Now it is all over. So much the worse. It couldn't last forever. None the less I succeeded in doing it for three years. You will say many things to him on my behalf.'

"She rose up. My brother continued questioning her:

"'But—the child? You had one to show him?'

"'Certainly—my sister's child. She lent it to me. I'd bet it was she gave you the information.'

"'Good! And all those letters from Italy?'

"She sat down again so as to laugh at her ease.

"'Oh! those letters—well, they were a bit of poetry. The Comte was not a Minister of Foreign Affairs for nothing.'

"'But—another thing?'

"'Oh! the other thing is my secret. I don't want to compromise anyone.'

"And bowing to him with a rather mocking smile she left the room without any emotion, an actress who had played her part to the end."

And the Comte de L—— added by way of moral:

"So take care about putting your trust in that sort of turtledove!"

MOONLIGHT

MADAME JULIE ROUBÈRE was awaiting her elder sister, Madame Henriette Letore, who had just returned after a trip to Switzerland.

The Letore household had left nearly five weeks ago. Madame Henriette had allowed her husband to return alone to their estate in Calvados, where some matters of business required his attention, and came to spend a few days in Paris with her sister. Night came on. In the quiet parlor darkened by twilight shadows, Madame Roubère was reading in an absent-minded fashion, raising her eyes whenever she heard a sound.

At last she heard a ring at the door, and presently her sister appeared, wrapped in a traveling cloak. And immediately, without any formal greeting, they clasped each other ardently, only desisting for a moment to begin embracing each other over again. Then they talked, asking questions about each other's health, about their respective families, and a thousand other things, gossiping, jerking out hurried, broken

sentences, and rushing about while Madame Henriette was removing her hat and veil.

It was now quite dark. Madame Roubère rang for a lamp, and as soon as it was brought in, she scanned her sister's face, and was on the point of embracing her once more. But she held back, scared and astonished at the other's appearance. Around her temples, Madame Letore had two long locks of white hair. All the rest of her hair was of a glossy, raven-black hue; but there alone, at each side of her head, ran, as it were, two silvery streams which were immediately lost in the black mass surrounding them. She was, nevertheless, only twenty-four years old, and this change had come on suddenly since her departure for Switzerland.

Without moving, Madame Roubère gazed at her in amazement, tears rising to her eyes, as she thought that some mysterious and terrible calamity must have fallen on her sister. She asked:

"What is the matter with you, Henriette?"

Smiling with a sad smile, the smile of one who is heartsick, the other replied:

"Why, nothing, I assure you. Were you noticing my white hair?"

But Madame Roubère impetuously seized her by the shoulders, and with a searching glance at her, repeated·

"What is the matter with you? Tell me what is the matter with you. And if you tell me a falsehood, I'll soon find it out."

They remained face to face, and Madame Henriette, who became so pale that she was near fainting, had two pearly tears at each corner of her drooping eyes.

Her sister went on asking:

"What has happened to you? What is the matter with you? Answer me!"

Then, in a subdued voice, the other murmured:

"I have—I have a lover."

And, hiding her forehead on the shoulder of her younger sister, she sobbed.

Then, when she had grown a little calmer, when the heaving of her breast had subsided, she commenced to unbosom herself, as if to cast forth this secret from herself, to empty this sorrow of hers into a sympathetic heart.

Thereupon, holding each other's hands tightly grasped, the two women went over to a sofa in a dark corner of the room, into which they sank, and the younger sister, passing her arm over the elder one's neck and drawing her close to her heart, listened.

* * * * * * *

"Oh! I recognize that there was no excuse for one; I do not understand myself, and since that day I feel as if I were mad. Be careful, my child, about yourself—be careful! If you only knew how weak we are, how quickly we yield, we fall! All it needs is a nothing, so little, so little, a moment of tenderness, one of those sudden fits of melancholy which steal into your soul, one of those longings to open your arms, to love, to embrace, which we all have at certain moments.

"You know my husband, and you know how fond of him I am; but he is mature and sensible, and cannot even comprehend the tender vibrations of a

woman's heart. He is always, always the same, always good, always smiling, always kind, always perfect. Oh! how I sometimes have wished that he would roughly clasp me in his arms, that he would embrace me with those slow, sweet kisses which make two beings intermingle, which are like mute confidences! How I wished that he was self-abandoned and even weak, so that he should have need of me, of my caresses, of my tears!

"This all seems very silly; but we women are made like that. How can we help it?

"And yet the thought of deceiving never came near me. To-day, it has happened, without love, without reason, without anything, simply because the moon shone one night on the Lake of Lucerne.

"During the month when we were traveling together, my husband, with his calm indifference, paralyzed my enthusiasm, extinguished my poetic ardor. When we were descending the mountain paths at sunrise, when as the four horses galloped along with the diligence, we saw, in the transparent morning haze, valleys, woods, streams, and villages, I clasped my hands with delight, and said to him: 'What a beautiful scene, darling! Kiss me now!' he only answered, with a smile of chilling kindliness, 'There is no reason why we should kiss each other because you like the landscape.'

"And his words froze me to the heart. It seems to me that when people love each other, they ought to feel more moved by love than ever in the presence of beautiful scenes.

"Indeed, he prevented the effervescent poetry that bubbled up within me from gushing out. How can

I express it? I was almost like a boiler, filled with steam, and hermetically sealed.

"One evening (we had been for four days staying in the Hotel de Fluelen), Robert, having got one of his sick headaches, went to bed immediately after dinner, and I went to take a walk all alone along the edge of the lake.

"It was a night such as one might read of in a fairy tale. The full moon showed itself in the middle of the sky; the tall mountains, with their snowy crests, seemed to wear silver crowns; the waters of the lake glittered with tiny rippling motions. The air was mild, with that kind of penetrating freshness which softens us till we seem to be swooning, to be deeply affected without any apparent cause. But how sensitive, how vibrating, the heart is at such moments! How quickly it leaps up, and how intense are its emotions!

"I sat down on the grass, and gazed at that vast lake so melancholy and so fascinating; and a strange thing passed into me; I became possessed with an insatiable need of love, a revolt against the gloomy dullness of my life. What! would it never be my fate to be clasped in the arms of a man whom I loved on a bank like this under the glowing moonlight? Was I never then, to feel on my lips those kisses so deep, delicious, and intoxicating which lovers exchange on nights that seem to have been made by God for passionate embraces? Was I never to know such ardent, feverish love in the moonlit shadows of a summer's night?

"And I burst out weeping like a woman who has lost her reason. I heard some person stirring behind

me. A man was intently gazing at me. When I turned my head round, he recognized me, and, advancing, said:

"'You are weeping, Madame?'

"It was a young barrister who was traveling with his mother, and whom we had often met. His eyes had frequently followed me.

"I was so much confused that I did not know what answer to give or what to think of the situation. I told him I felt ill.

"He walked on by my side in a natural and respectful fashion, and began talking to me about what we had seen during our trip. All that I had felt he translated into words; everything that made me thrill he understood perfectly, better even than I did myself. And all of a sudden he recited some verses of Alfred de Musset. I felt myself choking, seized with indescribable emotion. It seemed to me that the mountains themselves, the lake, the moonlight, were singing to me about things ineffably sweet.

"And it happened, I don't know how, I don't know why, in a sort of hallucination.

"As for him, I did not see him again till the morning of his departure.

"He gave me his card!"

* * * * * * *

And, sinking into her sister's arms, Madame Letore broke into groans—almost into shrieks.

Then Madame Roubère, with a self-contained and serious air, said very gently:

"You see, sister, very often it is not a man that we love, but love. And your real lover that night was the moonlight."

DOUBTFUL HAPPINESS

I CAN neither tell you the name of the country nor of the man. It was far, far from here, upon a hot, fertile coast. We had followed, since morning, the shore and the wheat fields and the sea covered with the sun. Flowers grew down very near the waves, the light waves, so sweet and sleepy. It was very warm; but a gentle heat, perfumed with the fat, humid, fruitful earth; one could believe that he was breathing germs.

I had been told that this evening I would find hospitality in the house of a Frenchman who lived at the end of the promontory, in a grove of orange-trees. Who was he? I do not know yet. He had arrived one morning, ten years before this, bought the land, planted his vines, and sown his seed; he had worked, had this man, with passion and fury. Month after month and year after year he had added to his domains, making the fertile, virgin soil yield without ceasing, and amassing a fortune by his indefatigable labor.

It was said that he worked constantly. Up with the dawn, going through his fields until night, superintending everything without rest, he seemed harassed by a fixed idea, tortured by an insatiable desire for money which nothing could distract or appease.

Now he seemed to be very rich.

The sun was setting when I reached his dwelling. This dwelling was at the end of a point in the midst of orange-trees. It was a large, square house, very simple, overlooking the sea.

As I approached, a large, bearded man appeared in the doorway. Having saluted him, I asked for shelter for the night. He extended his hand and said, smiling:

"Enter, sir, you are at home.

He led me to a room, gave some orders to a servant with the perfect ease and good grace of a man of the world, then he left me saying:

"We will dine when you are ready to come down."

We dined, *tête-à-tête*, upon a terrace opposite the sea. At first, I spoke of his country, so rich, so far away, so little known! He smiled, answering in an abstracted way:

"Yes, this is a pretty country. But no country pleases one much when it is far from those they love."

"You regret France?"

"I—I long for Paris."

"Why not return there?"

"Oh! I am going to return there."

And gradually we begin to talk of the French world, of the boulevards, and of the many features of

Paris. He asks me about men he has known, cites names, all of them familiar names upon the vaudeville stage.

"Who does one see at Tortoni's these days?"

"The same ones, except the dead."

I looked at him with marked interest, pursued by some vague remembrance. Certainly I had seen that head somewhere! But where? And when? He seemed fatigued, although vigorous, sad, though resolute. His great blond beard fell upon his breast, and sometimes he would take it near his chin and draw it through his closed hand, slipping it along to the very end. He was a little bald but had thick eyebrows and a heavy mustache which mingled with the hair of his beard.

Behind us the sun was disappearing in the sea, throwing upon the coast a cloud of fire. The orange-trees, in flower, exhaled a powerful, delicious fragrance on the evening air. Seeing nothing but me, and fixing his look upon me, he seemed to discover in my eyes, to see at the depth of my soul, the well-known, much loved image of the broad walk, so far away, that extends from the Madeleine to the Rue Drouot.

"Do you know Bourtelle?" he asked.

"Yes, certainly."

"Is he much changed?"

"Yes, he is all white."

"And the Ridamie?"

"Always the same."

"And the women? Tell me about the women. Let us see. Did you know Suzanne Verner?"

"Yes, very well, to the end."

"Ah! And Sophie Astier?"

"Dead!"

"Poor girl! Can it be— Did you know—"

He was suddenly silent. Then, in a changed voice, his face growing pale, he continued:

"No, it is better not to speak of her, it disturbs me so."

Then, as if to change the trend of his thought, he rose and said:

"Do you wish to go in?"

"I am willing to go." And I followed him into the house.

The rooms downstairs were enormous, bare, sad, and seemed abandoned. Some glass dishes were set upon the table by the tawny-skinned servants who constantly roamed around this dwelling. Two guns hung upon two nails on the wall; and, in the corners, were to be seen some spades, some fish lines, dried palm leaves, and objects of every kind placed there at random by those entering, that they might find them at hand should they chance to have need of them on going out.

My host smiled:

"This is a lodge, or rather the lodging place of an exile," said he, "but my chamber is more as it should be. Let us go in there."

I thought, on entering, that I was in a curiosity shop, so filled was the room with all kinds of things, things disconnected, strange, and varied, that one felt to be souvenirs of something. Upon the walls were two pretty engravings of well-known paintings, some stuffs, some arms, swords, pistols; then, in the middle of the principal panel, a square of white satin in a gold frame.

Surprised, I approached to look at it, when I perceived a pin which held a hair in the middle of the shining silk.

My host placed his hand on my shoulder and said, smiling:

"That is the only thing that I see here and the only thing I have seen for ten years. Mr. Prudhomme exclaims: 'This sword is the most beautiful day in my life.' But I say: 'This pin is all of my life.'"

I sought for a commonplace phrase and ended by saying:

"You have suffered through some woman?"

He replied brusquely: "You may say I have suffered, miserably,—but come out on my balcony. A name has suddenly come to my lips that I have not dared to pronounce, because, if you had answered 'dead' as you did when I spoke of Sophie Astier, my brain would be on fire, even to-day."

We were upon a large balcony where we could see two gulfs, one on the right and the other on the left, shut in by high, gray mountains. It was the hour of twilight, when the sun, entirely out of sight, no longer lights the earth, except by reflection from the sky.

He continued: "Do you know if Jeanne de Limours still lives?"

His eye, fixed on mine, was full of trembling anxiety. I smiled and answered:

"Yes, indeed, and prettier than ever."

"You know her?"

"Yes."

He hesitated. Then asked: "Completely?"

"No."

He took my hand. "Tell me about her," said he.

"I have nothing to tell; she is one of the most charming women, or rather girls, in Paris, and the most courted. She leads an agreeable, princess-like existence, that is all."

He murmured: "I love her," as if he had said: "I am going to die." Then, brusquely: "Ah! for three years that was a frightful but delicious existence of ours. I was very near killing her five or six times and she tried to put out my eyes with that pin you were just looking at. Wait! Do you see the little white point under my left eye? That shows how we loved each other! How can I explain this passion? You could never comprehend it.

"There should be such a thing as a simple love, born of the force of two hearts and two souls; and assuredly there is such a thing as an atrocious love, cruelly torturing, born of the invincible rapture of two beings totally unlike, who detest while they adore each other.

"This girl ruined me in three years. I possessed four millions which she squandered in her calm way, tranquilly, and destroyed with a sweet smile which seemed to fall from her eyes upon her lips.

"You know her? Then you know that there is something irresistible about her! What is it? I do not know. Is it those gray eyes, whose look enters into you and remains there like the barb of an arrow? Or is it rather that sweet smile, indifferent and seductive, which stays on her face like a mask? Her slow manner penetrates, little by little, and takes hold of you like a perfume, as does her tall figure, which seems to balance itself as she passes, for she

glides instead of walking, and her sweet voice, which drags a little and is so pretty that it seems to be the music of her smile; her gestures too, her always moderate gestures, always right, which intoxicate the eye, so harmonious are they.

"For three years, I saw only her upon the earth! How I suffered! Because she deceived me as well as everybody else. Why? For no reason, only for the sake of deceiving. And when I found it out and accused her of being a street girl, a bad woman, she said, tranquilly: 'Well, we are not married, are we?'

"Since I have come here, I have thought much about her, and have succeeded in understanding her: that girl is Manon Lescaut over again. Manon could never love without deceiving, and for her love, pleasure and money were all."

He was silent. Then, after some minutes he added:

"When I had squandered my last sou for her, she simply said to me: 'You understand, my dear, that I cannot live on air and weather. I love you very much, I love you more than anyone, but I must live. Misery and I can never dwell in the same house.'

"And if I could only tell you what an atrocious life I led by her side! Whenever I looked at her I had as much desire to kill her as I had to embrace her. Whenever I looked at her there came to me a furious desire to open my arms, press her to me until I strangled her. There was something about her, behind her eyes, something perfidious and unseizable which made me furious against her; and perhaps it was for that very reason that I loved her so much.

In her the Feminine, the odious, frightful Feminine, was more prominent than in any other woman. She was charged and surcharged with it, as with a venomous fluid. She was Woman, more than anyone else has ever been.

"And whenever I went out with her, she would cast her eyes over all men in such a fashion that she seemed to give herself to each one with only a look. This exasperated me, but attached me more strongly to her, nevertheless. This creature belonged to everybody from merely passing through the street, in spite of me, in spite of herself, from her very nature, although the allurement was most modest and sweet. Do you understand?

"And what torment! At the theater, in a restaurant, it seemed to me that everyone possessed her before my eyes. And whenever I left her alone, others did, in fact, possess her.

"It is ten years now since I saw her, and I love her now more than ever."

Night had spread over the earth. A powerful perfume of orange flowers floated in the air.

I said to him: "Will you try to see her again?"

He answered: "Surely! I have here now, in money and land, seven or eight hundred thousand francs. When the million is completed, I shall sell all and set out. With that I can have one year with her, one good, entire year. And then—adieu; my life will be finished."

I asked: "And after that?"

"After that," he answered, "I don't know. It will be finished. Perhaps I shall ask her to take me as a *valet de chambre.*"

THRIFT

THE midday sun fell in a large shower upon the fields. These were widespread and undulating, set between the bouquets of trees belonging to the farms, clothed with different grains, walls of rye and yellowing wheat, oats of a clear green, clover of a somber green with striped mantle, swaying and sweet upon the bosom of the earth. Down there, at the summit of the undulation, in rows like soldiers, interminable herds of cows, some lying down, some standing, blinking their great eyes in the ardent light, were ruminating and feeding in a clover field as vast as a lake. Two women, a mother and daughter, were going, at a regular pace, the one before the other, through a footpath hollowed out in the grain, toward the cows.

They each carried two zinc pails held out from their bodies by hoops from casks; and the metal, at each

step that they made, cast a glaring, white flame under the sun which struck it.

They did not speak. They were going to milk the cows. They arrived, placed one of the pails on the ground, and approached the first two beasts, which they made rise by a blow of their *sabots* in their sides. The animals rose slowly, first with their front legs, then their whole great rumps, which seemed heavy from the enormous udders of white, pendent flesh.

And the two Malivoires, mother and daughter, on their knees under the cows' bellies, drew on the most swollen teat with a lively movement of the hands, and brought at each pressure a thin thread of milk into the pail. A yellowish froth mounted to the edges of the pail and the women went from beast to beast the whole length of the line. As soon as they had finished milking one of them they sent her away, putting her into the untouched grass at the end of the pasture.

Then they set out slowly, borne down by the weight of the milk, the mother in front and the daughter behind her.

The latter stopped abruptly, set down her burden, seated herself, and began to weep.

Mother Malivoire, no longer hearing her step, returned and looked at her stupidly.

"What's the matter with you?" she said.

And the daughter, Celeste, tall, red-haired, with burned cheeks, spotted, as if drops of fire had fallen on her face some day when she had worked in the sun, murmured in a gentle whine like that of a whipped child:

"I cannot carry my milk."

The mother looked at her with a suspicious look, She repeated:

"What's the matter?"

Celeste answered, crouched on the ground between the two pails and covering her eyes with her apron:

"It tires me too much. I cannot."

The mother, for the third time, asked:

"What's the matter with you, then?"

And the daughter groaned:

"I believe that I am getting large."

And she sobbed.

The old woman put down her burden, so amazed that she found nothing to say. Finally she stammered:

"You—you—large, you goose—is it indeed possible?"

They were rich farmers, the Malivoires, people of position, looked up to, respected, malicious but powerful.

Celeste muttered: "I believe it is so, all the same."

The mother, frightened, looked at her daughter, fallen down before her in tears. After some seconds, she cried:

"You large! You large! Where did you get it, you scum!"

And Celeste, shaken with emotion, murmured:

"I believe it was in Polyte's carriage."

The old woman tried to find out, to comprehend, to think who could have brought this misfortune upon her daughter. If it was a rich lad, well thought

of, they might be able to arrange it. It might yet be only half bad. Celeste was not the first to whom such a thing had happened; but it went against her nevertheless, when she thought of the talk and their position.

She continued: "And who is it that has done this, trollop?"

And Celeste, resolved to tell all, muttered:

"I suppose it is Polyte."

Then mother Malivoire, beside herself with anger, flung herself upon her daughter and began to beat her with such frenzy that she shook off her bonnet. She struck great blows with her fist upon her head, her back, everywhere; and Celeste, completely hemmed in between the two pails, which only protected her a little, could but hide her face in her hands.

All the cows, surprised, had ceased to feed and were looking at them with their great eyes turned upon them. The last one bellowed, her mouth turned toward the two women.

After beating Celeste until her breath was gone, mother Malivoire, puffing hard, stopped; then, recovering her wits a little, it occurred to her that she should understand the situation perfectly. She inquired:

"Polyte! How in heaven's name is it possible? How could you? With the driver of a diligence! Did you lose your senses? He must have cast some spell around you, sure,—he, the owner of nothing!"

Celeste, still crouching, murmured from the dust:

"I didn't have to pay my fare!"

Then the old Norman woman understood.

Every week, Wednesday and Saturday, Celeste had gone to take to the town the farm products, chickens, ducks, butter, and eggs.

She set out at seven o'clock with two large baskets on her arm, the butter and eggs in one, the chickens and ducks in the other. And when she got to the highway, she waited for the post-carriage from Yvetot.

She would place her merchandise on the ground, and seat herself beside the ditch, while the chickens with their short, pointed beaks, and the ducks with their large, flat ones, passed their heads out through the wicker bars, looking at her with their round, stupid, surprised eyes.

Soon the wagon, a kind of box painted yellow, with a hood of black leather, would come along, shaking its body at the trot of the white nag.

And Polyte, the driver, a great, jovial boy, corpulent, although young, and so colored by the sun, burned by the wind, soaked by rain, and tinted by brandy that his face and neck were the color of a brick, would cry out from afar, cracking his whip:

"Good day, Mademoiselle Celeste. Your health? How goes it?"

She would pass her baskets to him one after the other, for him to place on the top; then she would mount, raising her foot high to reach the step, thus showing a strong calf covered with a blue stocking.

And each time Polyte repeated the same joke: "My eyes! It is not thin!"

And she would laugh, finding this very droll.

Then he would shout: "Go on there, *cocotte!*" and his thin horse would start again on the way.

Celeste, reaching for her purse in the bottom of her pocket, would slowly draw out ten sous, six sous for herself and four for the baskets, and pass them to Polyte over his shoulder. He would take them saying:

"Is this the day for a little spree?"

And he would laugh heartily, turning around and looking her full in the face, at his ease.

It was expensive for her, this paying a half franc for a two-mile journey, and still more so when she had no sous and could not bring herself to defer a payment.

One day, as she was paying her fare, she said:

"You ought to take a practical girl like me for six sous."

He began to laugh, and answered:

"Six sous, my beauty, you are worth more than that, I'm sure."

She insisted: "That would give you at least two francs a month."

He replied, hitting his horse:

"Well, I'm not particular, I will pass you for that and a little spree."

She inquired, with a simple air: "What is that?"

He was so much amused that he coughed from force of laughter. He said:

"A little spree is a spree in fact; a girl and boy, partners, then, forward two without music."

"I do not know that game, M. Polyte."

But he was not intimidated and repeated, being more and more amused:

"You will learn it, my pretty, a little spree for a boy and a girl."

And so, each time that she paid, he would ask, habitually:

"And isn't this the day for the little spree?"

She came to look upon it as a joke and would reply:

"Not to-day, M. Polyte, but Saturday, for sure."

And he would cry out, always laughing:

"Then it is agreed, for Saturday, my pretty."

Then she calculated that in the two years she had been going to market, she had paid Polyte all of forty-eight francs, and forty-eight francs to a country woman is not to be found in every wheel rut; and she calculated also that in two years more she would have paid nearly a hundred francs.

So it was that one day, one day in spring when they were alone, when he asked, according to his custom: "Isn't this the day for the little spree?" She answered: "If you wish, sir."

He was not at all astonished and stepped over to the back seat, murmuring with a contented air:

"Now, then. I knew well enough that it would come."

And the old white horse continued his trot at a pace so easy that he seemed to be dancing upon the same spot, and was entirely deaf to the voice that cried out sometimes from the back of the carriage: "Get up there, *cocotte*, get up there!"

Three months later, Celeste perceived that she was large.

She had told all this to her mother in tearful voice. Then the old woman, pale with fury, asked: "How much did you save, then?"

Celeste responded: "Four months; that makes eight francs, sure."

Then the desperate rage of the country woman was let loose and, falling upon her daughter, she beat her until her breath was gone. Then rising, she asked:

"Did you tell him that you were large?"

"No, no, sure not."

"Why didn't you tell him?"

"Because then he'd make me pay, perhaps."

And the old woman thought a moment, then taking up her pails, said:

"Come, get up and try to come along."

Then, after a silence, she added:

"And you needn't say anything to him so long as he does not see. Then we shall gain six or eight months anyway."

And Celeste, having stood up, still weeping, her face swollen and her bonnet off, began to walk along slowly, murmuring:

"Certainly, I'll say nothing."

HUMILIATION

THE two young women have the appearance of being buried in a bed of flowers. They are alone in an immense landau filled with bouquets like a giant basket. Upon the seat before them are two small hampers full of Nice violets, and upon the bear-skin which covers their knees is a heap of roses, gillyflowers, marguerites, tuberoses, and orange flowers, bound together with silk ribbons, which seem to crush the two delicate bodies, only allowing to appear above the spread-out, perfumed bed the shoulders, arms, and a little of their bodices, one of which is blue and the other lilac.

The coachman's whip bears a sheath of anemones, the horses' heads are decorated with wallflowers, the spokes of the wheels are clothed in mignonette, and in place of lanterns, there are two round, enormous bouquets, which seem like the two eyes of this strange, rolling, flowery beast.

The landau goes along Antibes street at a brisk trot, preceded, followed, and accompanied by a crowd of other garlanded carriages full of women concealed

under a billow of violets. For it is the Flower Festival at Cannes.

They arrived at the Foncière Boulevard where the battle takes place. The whole length of the immense avenue, a double line of bedecked equipages was going and coming, like a ribbon without end. They threw flowers from one to the other. Flowers passed in the air like balls, hit the fair faces, hovered and fell in the dust where an army of street urchins gathered them.

A compact crowd, clamorous but orderly, looked on, standing in rows upon the sidewalks, and held in place by policemen on horseback who passed along, pushing back the curious brutally with their feet, in order that the villains might not mingle with the rich.

Now, the people in the carriages recognize each other, call to each other, and bombard one another with roses. A chariot full of pretty young women, clothed in red like devils, attracts and holds all eyes. One gentleman, who resembles the portraits of Henry IV., throws repeatedly, with joyous ardor, a huge bouquet retained by an elastic. At the threat of the blow the women lower their heads and hide their eyes, but the gracious projectile only describes a curve and again returns to its master, who immediately throws it again to a new face.

The two young women empty their arsenal with full hands and receive a shower of bouquets; then, after an hour of battle, and a little wearied at the last, they order the coachman to take the road to the Juan gulf, which skirts the sea.

The sun disappeared behind the Esterel, outlining in black, upon a background of fire, the lacey sil-

houette of the stretched-out mountain. The calm sea was spread out blue and clear as far as the horizon, where it mingled with the sky and with the squadron anchored in the middle of the gulf, having the appearance of a troop of monstrous beasts, immovable upon the water, apocalyptic animals, humpbacked and clothed in coats-of-mail, capped with thin masts like plumes, and with eyes that lighted up when night came on.

The young women, stretched out under the fur robe, looked upon it languidly. Finally one of them said:

"How delicious these evenings are! Everything seems good. Is it not so, Margot?"

The other replied: "Yes, it is good. But there is always something lacking."

"What is it? For my part, I am completely happy. I have need of nothing."

"Yes? You think so, perhaps. But whatever well-being surrounds our bodies, we always desire something more—for the heart."

Said the other, smiling: "A little love?"

"Yes."

They were silent, looking straight before them; then the one called Marguerite said: "Life does not seem supportable to me without that. I need to be loved, if only by a dog. And we are all so, whatever you may say, Simone."

"No, no, my dear. I prefer not to be loved at all than to be loved by no one of importance. Do you think, for example, that it would be agreeable to me to be loved by—by—"

She looked for some one by whom she could possibly be loved, casting her eyes over the neighboring

country. Her eyes, after having made the tour of the whole horizon, fell upon the two metal buttons shining on the coachman's back, and she continued, laughing, "By my coachman?"

Miss Marguerite scarcely smiled as she replied:

"I can assure you it is very amusing to be loved by a domestic. This has happened to me two or three times. They roll their eyes so queerly that one is dying to laugh. Naturally, the more one is loved, the more severe she becomes, since otherwise, one puts herself in the way of being made ridiculous for some very slight cause, if anyone happened to observe it."

Miss Simone listened, her look fixed straight before her; then she declared:

"No, decidedly, the heart of my valet at my feet would not appear to me sufficient. But tell me how you perceived that you were loved."

"I perceived it in them as I do in other men, they become so stupid!"

"But others do not appear so stupid to me, when they are in love."

"Idiots, my dear, incapable of chatting, of answering, of comprehending anything."

"And you? What effect did it have on you to be loved by a domestic? Were you moved—flattered?"

"Moved? No. Flattered? Yes, a little. One is always flattered by the love of a man, whoever he may be."

"Oh! now, Margot!"

"Yes, my dear. Wait! I will tell you a singular adventure that happened to me. You will see what curious things take place among us in such cases.

"It was four years ago in the autumn, when I found myself without a maid. I had tried five or six, one after the other, all of them incompetent, and almost despaired of finding one, when I read in the advertisements of a newspaper of a young girl, knowing how to sew, embroider, and dress hair, who was seeking a place and could furnish the best of references. She could also speak English.

"I wrote to the address given, and the next day the person in question presented herself. She was rather tall, thin, a little pale, with a very timid air. She had beautiful black eyes, a charming color, and she pleased me at once. I asked for her references; she gave me one written in English, because she had come, she said, from the house of Lady Ryswell, where she had been for ten years.

"The certificate attested that the girl was returning to France of her own will, and that she had nothing to reproach her for during her long service with her, except a little of the *French coquettishness.*

"The modest turn of the English phrase made me smile a little and I engaged the maid immediately. She came to my house the same day; she called herself Rose.

"At the end of a month, I adored her. She was a treasure, a pearl, a phenomenon.

"She could dress my hair with exquisite taste; she could flute the lace of a cap better than the best of the professionals, and she could make frocks. I was amazed at her ability. Never had I been so well served.

"She dressed me rapidly with an astonishing lightness of hand. I never felt her fingers upon my skin,

and nothing is more disagreeable to me than contact with a maid's hand. I immediately got into excessively idle habits, so pleasant was it to let her dress me from head to foot, from chemise to gloves — this tall, timid girl, always blushing a little and never speaking. After my bath, she would rub me and massage me while I slept a little while on my divan; indeed, I came to look upon her more as a friend in poorer circumstances, than a servant.

"One morning the *concierge,* with some show of mystery, said he wished to speak to me. I was surprised but let him enter. He was an old soldier, once orderly for my husband.

"He appeared to hesitate at what he was going to say. Finally, he said stammeringly: 'Madame, the police captain for this district is downstairs.'

"I asked: 'What does he want?'

"'He wants to search the house.'

"Certainly the police are necessary, but I do detest them. I never can make it seem a noble profession. And I answered, irritated as well as wounded:

"'Why search here? For what purpose? There has been no burglary.'

"He answered:

"'He thinks that a criminal is concealed somewhere here.'

"I began to be a little afraid and ordered the police captain to be brought that I might have some explanation. He was a man rather well brought up and decorated with the Legion of Honor. He excused himself, asked my pardon, then asserted that I had among my servants a convict!

"I was thunderstruck, and answered that I could vouch for every one of them and that I would make a review of them for his satisfaction.

"'There is Peter Courtin, an old soldier.'

"It was not he.

"'The coachman, Francis Pingau, a peasant, son of my father's farmer.'

"It was not he.

"'A stable boy, also from Champagne, and also a son of peasants I had known, and no more except the footman whom you have seen.'

"It was not any of them.

"'Then, sir, you see that you have been deceived.'

"'Pardon me, Madame, but I am sure I am not deceived. As he has not at all the appearance of a criminal, will you have the goodness to have all your servants appear here before you and me, all of them?'

"I hesitated at first, then I yielded, summoning all my people, men and women.

"He looked at them all for an instant, then declared:

"'This is not all.'

"'Your pardon, sir,' I replied; 'this is all except my own maid who could not possibly be confounded with a convict.'

"He asked: 'Could I see her too?'

"'Certainly.'

"I rang and Rose appeared immediately. Scarcely had she entered when he gave a signal and two men, whom I had not seen, concealed behind the door, threw themselves upon her, seized her hands, and bound them with cords.

"I uttered a cry of fury, and was going to try and defend her. The captain stopped me:

"'This girl, Madame, is a man who calls himself John Nicholas Lecapet, condemned to death in 1879 for assassination preceded by violation. His sentence was changed to life imprisonment. He escaped four months ago. We have been on the search for him ever since.'

"I was dismayed, struck dumb. I could not believe it. The policeman continued, laughing:

"'I can only give you one proof. His right arm is tattooed.'

"His sleeve was rolled up. It was true. The policeman added, certainly in bad taste:

"'Doubtless you will be satisfied without the other proofs.'

"And he led away my maid!

"Well, if you will believe it, the feeling which was uppermost in me was that of anger at having been played with in this way, deceived and made ridiculous; it was not shame at having been dressed, undressed, handled, and touched by this man, but—a—profound humiliation—the humiliation of a woman. Do you understand?"

"No, not exactly."

"Let us see. Think a minute— He had been condemned—for violation, this young man—and that—that humiliated me—there! Now do you understand?"

And Miss Simone did not reply. She looked straight before her, with her eyes singularly fixed upon the two shining buttons of the livery, and with that sphinx's smile that women have sometimes.

THE WEDDING NIGHT

MY DEAR Genevieve, you ask me to tell you about my wedding journey. How do you think I dare? Ah! sly one, who had nothing to tell me, who even allowed me to guess at nothing — but there! nothing from nothing!

Now, you have been married eighteen months, yes, eighteen months, you, my best friend, who formerly said you could conceal nothing from me, and you had not the charity to warn me! If you had only given the hint! If you had only put me on my guard! If you had put one little simple suspicion in my soul, you might have hindered me from making the egregious blunder for which I still blush, and which my husband will laugh at until his death. You alone are responsible for it! I have rendered myself frightfully ridiculous forever; I have committed one of those errors of which the memory is never effaced — and by your fault, wicked one! Oh! if I had known!

Wait! I take courage from writing, and have decided to tell you all. But promise me not to laugh

too much. And do not expect a comedy. It is a drama.

You recall my marriage. I was to start the same evening on my wedding journey. Certainly I did not at all resemble Paulette, whom "Gyp" tells us about in that droll account of her spiritual romance, called, "About Marriage." And if my mother had said to me, as Mrs. d'Hautretan did to her daughter: "Your husband will take you in his arms—and—" I should certainly not have responded as Paulette did, laughing: "Go no farther, mamma, I know all that as well as you—"

As for me, I knew nothing at all, and mamma, my poor mamma who is always frightened, dared not broach the delicate subject.

Well, then, at five o'clock in the evening, after the collation, they told us that the carriage was waiting. The guests had gone, I was ready. I can still hear the noise of the trunks on the staircase and the blowing of papa's nose, which seemed to indicate that he was weeping. In embracing me, the poor man said: "Good courage!" as if I were going to have a tooth pulled. As for mamma, she was a fountain. My husband urged me to hasten these painful adieux, and I was myself all in tears, although very happy. That is not easy to explain but is entirely true. All at once, I felt something pulling at my dress. It was Bijou, wholly forgotten since morning. The poor beast was saying adieu to me after his fashion. This gave my heart a little blow, and I felt a great desire to embrace my dog. I seized him (you remember he is as large as a fist) and began to devour him with kisses. I love to caress animals. It

gives me a sweet pleasure, causing a kind of delicious shiver.

As for him, he was like a mad creature; he waved his paws, licked me, and nibbled, as he does when he is perfectly content. Suddenly, he took my nose in his teeth, and I felt that he had really bitten me. I uttered a little cry and put the dog down. He had bitten, although only in play. Everybody was disturbed. They brought water, vinegar, and some pieces of linen. My husband himself attended to it. It was nothing after all but three little holes which his teeth had made. At the end of five minutes the blood was stopped and we went away.

It had been decided that we should go on a journey through Normandy for about six weeks.

That evening we arrived at Dieppe. When I say evening, I mean midnight.

You know how I love the sea. I declared to my husband that I could not retire until I had seen it. He appeared very contrary. I asked him laughing, if he was sleepy.

He answered: "No, my dear, but you must understand that I would like to be alone with you."

I was surprised. "Alone with me?" I replied, "but you have been alone with me all the way from Paris, in the train."

He laughed: "Yes—but,—in the train,—that is not the same thing as being in our room."

I would not give up. "Oh, well," said I, "we shall be alone on the beach, and that is all there is to it!"

Decidedly he was not pleased. He said: "Very well; as you wish."

The night was magnificent, one of those nights which bring grand, vague ideas to the soul,—more sensations than thoughts, perhaps,—that bring a desire to open the arms as if they were wings and embrace the heavens—but how can I express it? One always feels that these unknown things can be comprehended.

There was a dreaminess, a poesy in the air, a happiness of another kind than that of earth, a sort of infinite intoxication which comes from the stars, the moon, the silver, glistening water. These are the best moments of life. They are a glimpse of a different existence, an embellished, delicious existence; they are the revelation of what could be, of what will be, perhaps.

Nevertheless, my husband appeared impatient to return. I said to him: "Are you cold?"

"No."

"Then look at the little boat down there, which seems asleep on the water. Could anything be better than this! I would willingly remain here until daybreak. Tell me, shall we wait and see aurora?"

He seemed to think that I was mocking him, and very soon took me back to the hotel by force! If I had known! Oh! the poor creature!

When we were once alone, I felt ashamed, constrained, without knowing why. I swear it. Finally, I made him go into the bath-room while I got into bed.

Oh! my dear, how can I go further? Well, here it is! He took without doubt, my extreme innocence for mischief, my extreme simplicity for profligacy, my confident, credulous abandon for some kind of

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AFTER THE ORIGINAL DRAWING BY V. KOTTEMBOURG

"I ran to the door, drew the bolts, and fled nearly naked downstairs. Other doors opened, and men in night apparel appeared with candles in their hands."

tactics, and paid no regard to the delicate management that is necessary in order to make a soul wholly unprepared comprehend and accept such mysteries.

All at once, I believe he lost his head. Then fear seized me; I asked him if he wished to kill me. When terror invades, one does not reason nor think further, one is mad. In one second I had imagined frightful things. I thought of various stories in the newspapers, of mysterious crimes, of all the whispered tales of young girls married to miserable men! I fought, repulsed him, was overcome with fright. I even pulled a wisp of hair from his mustache, and relieved by this effort, I arose, shouting: "Help! help!" I ran to the door, drew the bolts, and hurried, nearly naked, downstairs.

Other doors opened. Men, in night apparel, appeared with lights in their hands. I fell into the arms of one of them, imploring his protection. He made an attack upon my husband.

I knew no more about it. They fought and they cried; then they laughed, but laughed in a way you could never imagine. The whole house laughed, from the cellar to the garret. I heard in the corridors and in the rooms about us explosions of gaiety. The kitchen maids laughed under the roof, and the bell-boy was in contortions on his bench in the vestibule.

Think of it! In a hotel!

Soon, I found myself alone with my husband, who made me some summary explanations, as one explains a surgical operation before it is undertaken. He was not at all content. I wept until daylight, and we went away at the opening of the doors.

That is not all. The next day we arrived at Pourville, which is only an embryo station for baths. My husband overwhelmed me with little attentions and tender care. After a first misunderstanding, he appeared enchanted. Ashamed, and much cast down, over my adventure of the evening before, I was also amiable as could be, and docile. But you cannot figure the horror, the disgust, almost the hatred that Henry inspired in me, when I knew the infamous secret that they conceal from young girls. I was in despair, as sad as death, mindful of everything, and harassed by the need of being near my poor parents. The next day after we arrived at Etretat. All the bathers were in a flurry of excitement. A young woman had been bitten by a little dog, and had just died of rabies. A great shiver ran down my back when I heard this story told at the hotel table. It seemed to me immediately, that I was suffering in the nose, and I had strange feelings all along my limbs.

That night I could not sleep; I had completely forgotten my husband. What if I were going to die too from rabies? I asked for some details, the next day, from the proprietor of the hotel. He gave me some frightful ones. I passed the day in walking upon the shore. I thought I could no longer speak. Hydrophobia! What a horrible death!

Henry asked me: "What is the matter? You seem sad."

I answered: "Oh! Nothing! Nothing!"

My staring eyes were fixed upon the sea without seeing it, upon farms, upon the fields, without my ever being able to say what came under my gaze. For nothing in the world would I have confessed the

thought that tortured me. Some pain, true pain was felt in my nose. I wished to return.

As soon as I was back in the hotel, I shut myself up in order to examine the wound. There was nothing to be seen. Nevertheless, I could not doubt that it was working me great harm. I wrote immediately to my mother, a short letter which probably sounded strange. I asked an immediate reply to some insignificant questions. After having signed my name, I wrote: "Especially, do not forget to give me some news of Bijou."

The next day I could not eat, but I refused to see a physician. All day long I remained seated upon the beach looking at the bathers in the water. They came, the thin and the stout, all hideous in their frightful costumes; but I never thought of laughing. I thought: "They are happy, these people! They have not been bitten! They are going to live! They have nothing to fear. They can amuse themselves at will, because they are at peace!"

At that instant I carried my hand to my nose, touching it; was it not swollen? And soon I entered the hotel, shut myself in, and looked at it in the glass. Oh! it had changed color. I should die now very soon.

That evening I felt all at once a sort of tenderness for my husband, a tenderness of despair. He appeared good to me; I leaned upon his arm. Twenty times I was on the point of telling him my distressing secret, but ended in keeping silent.

He abused odiously my listlessness and the weakness of my soul. I had not the force to resist him, nor even the will. I would bear all, suffer all!

The next day I received a letter from my mother. She replied to my questions, but said not a word about Bijou. I immediately thought: "He is dead and they are concealing it from me." I wished to run to the telegraph office and send a dispatch. One thought stopped me: "If he really is dead, they will not tell me." I then resigned myself to two more days of anguish. I wrote again. I asked them to send me the dog, for diversion, because I was a little lonesome.

A trembling fit took me in the afternoon. I could not raise a full glass without spilling half. The state of my soul was lamentable. I escaped from my husband at twilight and ran to the church. I prayed a long time. On returning, I felt anew the pains in my nose and consulted a druggist whose shop was lighted. I spoke to him as if one of my friends had been bitten, asking his advice in the matter. He was an amiable man, very obliging. He advised me freely. But I forgot to notice what he said, my mind was so troubled. I only remember this: "Purging is often recommended." I bought many bottles of I know not what, under pretext of sending them to my friend.

The dogs that I met filled me with horror, creating in me a desire to flee at the top of my speed. It seemed to me many times, also, that I had a desire to bite them. My night was horribly disturbed. My husband profited by it.

The next day I received a response from my mother. "Bijou," said she, "is very well, but it would expose him to too much to send him alone on a railroad train." Then they would not send him to me. He was dead.

I could not yet sleep. As for Henry, he snored. He awoke many times. I was annihilated.

The next day I took a bath in the sea. I was almost overcome in entering the water, I was so frightfully cold. I was more than ever shocked by this frigid sensation. I trembled in every limb, but felt no more pain in the nose.

By chance, they presented me to the medical inspector of the baths, a charming man. I led up to my subject with extreme skill. I then said to him that my little dog had bitten me several days before, and asked him what was necessary to be done if we discovered any inflammation. He laughed and answered: "In your situation, Madame, I see only one remedy, which would be for you to make a new nose."

And as I did not comprehend, he added: "Your husband will see to that." And I was no better informed on leaving him than I was before.

Henry, that evening, seemed very gay, very happy. We went to the Casino, but he did not wait for the end of the play before proposing to me to return. As there was nothing of interest to me, I followed him. But I could not remain in bed; all my nerves were unstrung and vibrating. Neither could he sleep. He embraced me, caressed me, became all sweetness and tenderness, as if he had finally guessed how much I was suffering. I accepted his caresses without even comprehending them or thinking about them.

But suddenly an extraordinary, fearful crisis seized me. I uttered a frightful cry, pushed back my husband who took hold of me, ran into my room, and began

to beat my head and face against the door. It was rage! Horrible rage! I was lost!

Henry raised me up, himself frightened and trying to understand the trouble. I kept silent. I was resigned now. I awaited death. I knew that after some hours of respite, another crisis would seize me, even to the last which would be mortal.

I allowed them to put me in the bed. At the point of day, the irritating obsessions of my husband caused a new paroxysm, which was longer than the first. I had a desire to tear and bite and howl; it was terrible and nevertheless, not so painful as I had believed.

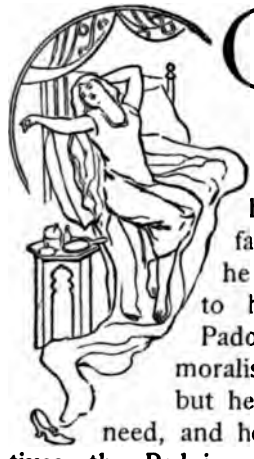
Toward eight o'clock in the morning, I slept for the first time in four nights. At eleven o'clock, a beloved voice awoke me. It was mamma, whom my letters had frightened and who had hastened to see me. She had in her hand a great basket, from whence came some little barks. I seized it, foolish in hope. I opened it, and Bijou jumped upon the bed, embraced me, gamboled about, rolled himself upon my pillow, frenzied with joy.

Ah! well, my dearie, you may believe me if you will, I did not comprehend all until the next day! Oh! the imagination, how it works! And to think that I believed— Tell me, was it not too foolish?

I have never confessed to anyone, you will understand why, the tortures of those four days. Think, if my husband had known! He has teased enough already about my adventure at Pourville. For my part, I cannot be too angry at his jests.

I am done. We have to accustom ourselves to everything in life.

THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER



QUARTERMASTER VARAJOU had obtained permission to pass eight days with his sister, Madame Padoie. Varajou, who was in garrison at Rennes and led a jolly life there, finding himself high and dry with his family, had written to his sister that he would devote his week of liberty to her. Not that he loved Madame Padoie so much, for she was a little moralist, devout and always irritating; but he was in need of money, in great need, and he remembered that of all his relatives, the Padoies were the only ones from whom he had never borrowed.

Father Varajou, an old horticulturist of Angers, now retired from business, had closed his purse to his rake of a son and had scarcely seen him for ten years. His daughter had married Padoie, a former employee of the Treasury, who had since become collector at Vannes.

Varajou, then, on getting out of the train, took himself to the house of his brother-in-law. He found him in his office, in process of discussion with some Breton peasants of the neighborhood. Padoie raised himself from his chair, extended his hand across the table, which was covered with papers and said: "Take a seat; I will be with you in a moment." Then he seated himself again and continued his discussion.

The peasants could not understand his explanations, the collector could not comprehend their reasoning; he spoke French, they spoke Breton, and the deputy who acted as interpreter seemed not to understand anyone.

It was long, very long. Varajou looked at his brother-in-law, thinking: "What an idiot!" Padoie must have been about fifty. He was tall, thin, bony, slow, hairy, with his eyebrows arching until they made spears of hair above his eyes. He wore on his head a velvet cap ornamented with gold braid, and his look had the tameness which his action showed. His words, his gestures, his thoughts were all slow. Varajou kept repeating: "What an idiot!"

He was himself one of those noisy brawlers for whom life has no greater pleasures than those of the *café* and the public woman. Outside these two poles of existence, he understood nothing. Boasting, blustering, full of disdain for everybody, he despised the whole universe from the height of his ignorance. When he had said: "What a devil of a holiday!" he had expressed the highest degree of admiration of which his mind was capable.

Padoie, having finished with his peasants, turned to him and asked:

"You are well?"

"Not bad, as you see. And you?"

"Very well, thank you. It is amiable of you to think of coming to see us."

"Oh! I have thought of it for a long time; but you know in the military profession one doesn't have much liberty."

"Oh! I know, I know; and that is why it is very amiable of you."

"And Josephine is well?"

"Yes, yes, thank you; you shall see her very soon."

"Where is she?"

"She has gone to pay some visits; we have so many relatives here, and this is a very exacting, proper town."

"I have no doubt of it."

Then the door opened and Madame Padoie appeared. She went toward her brother without eagerness, held up her cheek, and asked:

"Have you been here long?"

"No, scarcely half a hour."

"Ah! I thought the train would be late. If you are ready, come into the parlor."

They passed into a neighboring room, leaving Padoie to his accounts and his collections. When they were alone, she said:

"I have heard of some of your fine actions."

"What, for instance?"

"It appears that you have been conducting yourself like a blackguard; that you get tipsy and have been getting into debt."

He appeared very much astonished. "I," said he, "never in my life."

"Oh! you needn't deny it, I know all about it."

He still tried to defend himself, but she closed his mouth with so violent a lecture that he was forced to silence.

Then she said: "We dine at six o'clock; you are free until dinner. I cannot ask your company because I, not unfortunately, have some things to do." Left alone, he hesitated between sleeping and taking a walk. He looked for a door leading to his room and found one to the street. He decided in favor of the street.

He began to wander around slowly, his sword hitting against his legs, through the sad Breton town, so sleepy, so calm, so dead that on the border of its inner sea, they call it "The Morbihan." He looked at the little gray houses, the few passers, the empty shops, and said to himself: "Not gay, surely, nor amusing, is Vannes. A sad idea, coming here!"

He sought the port, so dreary, returned by a solitary, desolate boulevard and was back before five o'clock. Then he threw himself upon his bed to sleep until dinner.

The maid woke him by knocking on the door and saying: "Dinner is served, sir!"

He descended. In the humid dining-room, where the paper was nearly all unglued by the sun, a supper was waiting upon a round table without a cloth, for which three melancholy plates were set.

Mr. and Mrs. Padoie entered at the same time as Varajou. They were seated, then the husband and

wife made the sign of the cross upon the pit of their stomachs, after which Padoie served the soup, a thick soup. It was the day for potpie. After the soup came the beef, beef too much cooked, melted and fat, which had fallen apart in boiling. The noncommissioned officer masticated it slowly, with disgust, with fatigue and rage.

Madame Padoie said to her husband: "Are you going to the President's house this evening?"

"Yes, my dear."

"Do not stay late. You are all worn out every time you go out. You are not made for the world, with your bad health."

Then she spoke of the society of Vannes, of the excellent society where the Padoies were received with consideration, thanks to their religious sentiments.

Then they served a *purée* of potatoes with a dish of pork, in honor of the new arrival. Then some cheese and it was finished. Not even coffee.

When Varajou understood that he was to pass the evening face to face with his sister, forced to undergo her reproaches, listen to her sermons, without even a solacing glass to cool his throat or to aid the remonstrances in slipping down, he concluded that the punishment was more than he could bear, and declared that he must go to the armory to execute some commission under his leave of absence.

And he escaped at seven o'clock.

Scarcely was he in the street when he began to shake himself, like a dog just out of the water. He murmured: "What a blankety-blank-blank life of

drudgery!" And he began to search for a *café*, the best *café* in town. He found it over a room, behind two gas jets. Inside, five or six men, some semi-gentlemen, a little noisy, were seated around some little tables drinking and chatting, while two billiard players were walking around the green cloth on which the ivory balls were hitting each other. They were counting: "Eighteen,—nineteen.—No luck.—Oh! good shot! Well played!—Eleven.—You must play on the red.—Twenty.—Froze! Froze! Twelve.—There! was I right?"

Varajou ordered a *demi-tasse* and a small glass of brandy, of the best. Then he sat down and awaited its coming.

He was accustomed to pass his evenings at liberty with his comrades in the clatter of glasses and the smoke of pipes. This silence, this calm exasperated him. He began to drink, first his coffee then his brandy and then he gave a second order. Now he had a desire to laugh, then to cry, then to sing, and then of fighting some one.

He said to himself: "Jove! How this sets me up! I must make a feast of it." And the idea came to him of finding some girls to amuse himself with.

He called one of the employees: "Hey! waiter!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Say, waiter, where can one go here to have a merry time?"

The man looked stupid at this question. Finally he answered: "I don't know, sir. Only here!"

"Here! And what do you call a merry time, I should like to know!"

"Oh! I don't know, sir, drinking beer, or some good wine."

"Go on, you oyster! And the girls, where are they?"

"The girls! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Yes, the girls, where are they to be found here?"

"Girls?"

"Yes, yes, girls!"

The waiter came nearer to him and said in a low voice: "You want to know where there is a house?"

"Yes, of course!"

"You take the second street to the left and then the first to the right. It is number fifteen."

"Thanks, old man. Here is something for you."

"Thanks, sir."

And Varajou went out repeating: "Second to the left, first to the right, fifteen." At the end of a few seconds he thought: "Second to the left, — yes. But in coming out of the *café*, did I turn to the left or the right? Bah! It doesn't make any difference. I shall soon find out."

And he walked on, turning into the second street at the left, then into the first at the right, and looked for number fifteen. It was a house of very good appearance, where he saw the windows of the first story lighted behind the closed shutters. The vestibule door was half open and a lamp was burning in there.

"This is the place," thought the noncommissioned officer.

Then he entered and, as no one came, he called: "Hey there! hey!"

A little maid appeared and was struck dumb on seeing a soldier. He said to her: "Good evening, my child. The ladies are upstairs?"

"Yes, sir."

"In the salon?"

"Yes, sir."

"And I can go right up?"

"Yes, sir."

"The first door I come to?"

"Yes, sir."

He went up and perceived in a room well lighted with two large lamps, a luster, and two candelabra containing wax candles, four ladies in evening gowns, who seemed to be waiting for some one.

Three of them, the younger, were seated, with a somewhat starched appearance, upon a garnet velvet sofa, while the fourth, a woman about forty-five years of age, was arranging flowers in a vase; she was very large and wore a green silk frock which seemed like the envelope of a monstrous flower, her enormous arms and neck being like a rice-powdered rose.

The noncommissioned officer saluted: "Good evening, ladies."

The eldest one turned, appeared surprised, but bowed: "Good evening, sir."

He sat down. But seeing that he did not seem to be welcomed with any enthusiasm, he thought that, without doubt, only officers were admitted there, and the idea troubled him. Then he said to himself: "Bah! If one of them comes, we shall see." And then he said: "Well, everything goes well?"

The large lady, the mistress of the house, doubtless, answered:

"Very well, thank you."

He found nothing more to say, and everybody was silent. Finally, he began to be ashamed of his timidity and, laughing with a constrained laugh said: "Oh! well, there is nothing very merry about this — I'll pay for a bottle of wine —"

He had not finished his sentence when the door opened and Padoie, in evening clothes, appeared.

Varajou uttered a howl of joy and, jumping up, rushed at his brother-in-law, seized him in his arms, and made him dance all around the room, crying: "Well, if here isn't Padoie! It is Padoie! It's Padoie!"

Then, releasing the collector, who was lost in surprise, he said mockingly, in his face: "Ah! ah! ah! joker! joker! You do break away then sometimes — Ah! what a joker— And my sister! You let her loose too — say! —"

Realizing all the benefits from this unlooked-for situation, so impressed was he with the full force of it, that he threw himself upon a sofa and began to laugh so loud that the very furniture seemed to crack.

The three young ladies arose with one accord and escaped, while the elderly one repaired toward the door, ready to flee if it became necessary.

Then two gentlemen appeared, both in evening clothes, and decorated. Padoie rushed toward them saying: "Oh! Mr. President — he is mad — surely he is mad— They sent him to us to convalesce — you can see at once that he is mad."

Varajou seated himself, comprehending nothing about him, but guessing that he had done something

monstrously foolish. Finally, he arose and turning toward his brother-in-law asked: "Where are we?"

And Padoie, seized suddenly with a foolish anger stammered:

"Where are — where — where are we? Unfortunate — miserable — infamous fellow — where are we? In the house of the President — of the President of Mortemain — of Mortemain — of — of — of — of Mortemain. Ah! ah! — you scamp — scamp — you scamp! —"

IN THE COURT ROOM

THE hall of the Justice of the Peace of Gorgeville is full of peasants who, seated in rows along the walls, are awaiting the opening of the session.

There are tall and short, stout and thin, all with the trim appearance of a row of fruit-trees. They have placed their baskets on the floor and remain silent, tranquil, preoccupied with their own affairs. They have brought with them the odor of the stable, of sweat, of sour milk, and of the manure-heap. Flies are buzzing under the white ceiling. Through the open door the crowing of cocks is heard.

Upon a sort of platform is a long table covered with green cloth. An old, wrinkled man sits there writing at the extreme left. A policeman, tipped back upon his chair, is gazing into the air, at the extreme right. And upon the bare wall, a great Christ, in wood, twisted into a pitiable pose, seems to offer his eternal suffering for the cause of these brutes with the odor of beasts.

The Justice of the Peace enters, finally. He is corpulent, high colored, and rustles his magistrate's black

robe as he walks with the rapid step of a large man in a hurry; he seats himself, places his cap upon the table, and looks at the assemblage with an air of profound scorn.

He is a scholarly provincial, a bright mind of the district, one of those who translate Horace, relish the little verses of Voltaire, and know by heart Vert-Vert as well as the snuffy poetry of Parny.

He pronounced officially, the words:

"Now, Mr. Potel, call the cases." Then smiling, he murmured:

"*Quidquid tentabam dicere versus erat.*"

Then the clerk of the court, in an unintelligible voice, jabbered:

"Madame Victoire Bascule *vs.* Isidore Paturon."

An enormous woman came forward, a lady of the country town of the canton, with a much beribboned hat, a watch-chain festooned upon her breast, rings on her fingers, and earrings shining like lighted candles.

The Justice greeted her with a look of recognition, which savored of jest, and said:

"Madame Bascule, state your troubles."

The opposing party stands on the other side. It is represented by three persons. Among them is a young peasant of twenty-five, as fat-cheeked as an apple and as red as a poppy. At his right is his wife, very young, thin, small, like a bantam chicken, with a narrow, flat head covered, as in Crete, with a pink bonnet. She has a round eye, astonished and angry, which looks sidewise like that of poultry. At the left of the boy sits his father, an old, bent man, whose twisted body disappears in his starched blouse as if it were under a bell.

Madame Bascule explains:

"Mr. Justice, for fifteen years I have treated this boy kindly. I brought him up and loved him like a mother, I have done everything for him, I have made a man of him. He promised me, he swore to me that he would never leave me, he even took an oath, on account of which I gave him a little property, my land at Bec-de-Mortin, which is worth about six thousand. Then, this little thing, a little nothing, this brat—"

The Justice: "Moderate your language, Madame Bascule."

Madame Bascule: "A little—a little—I think I am understood—turns his head, does, I know not what to him, neither do I know why,—and he goes and marries her, this fool, this great beast, and gives her my property, my property at Bec-de-Mortin. Ah! no, ah! no—I have a paper, here it is—which gives me back my property, now. We had a statement drawn up at the notary's for the property and a statement on paper for the sake of friendship. One is worth as much as the other. Each to his right, is it not so?"

She held toward the Justice a stamped paper, wide open.

Isidore Paturon: "It is not true."

The Justice: "Keep silent. You shall speak in your turn." [He reads.]

"'I, the undersigned, Isidore Paturon, do, by this present, promise Madame Bascule, my benefactress, never to leave her while I live, and to serve her with devotion.

"'GORGEVILLE, August 5, 1883.'"

The Justice: "There is a cross here for the signature. Do you not know how to write?"

Isidore: "No. I don't."

The Justice: "And is it you who made this cross?"

Isidore: "No, it was not I."

The Justice: "Who did make it then?"

Isidore: "She did."

The Justice: "You are ready to swear that you did not make this cross?"

Isidore [earnestly]: "Upon the head of my mother and my father, my grandmother and grandfather, and of the good God who hears me, I swear that it was not I." [He raises his hand and strikes it against his side to emphasize his oath.]

The Justice [laughing]: "What have been your relations with Madame Bascule, the lady here present?"

Isidore: "I have helped to amuse her." [Grinning at the audience.]

The Justice: "Be careful of your expressions. Do you mean to say that your connections have not been as pure as she pretends?"

Father Paturon [taking up the narrative]: "He wasn't fifteen years old yet, not fifteen years old, Mr. Judge, when she debauched—"

The Justice: "Do you mean debauched?"

The Father: "You understand me. He was not fifteen years old, I say. And for four years before that already, she had nursed him with the greatest care, feeding him like a chicken she was fattening, until he was ready to split, saving your respect. And then, when the time had come that she thought was just right, then she depraved him—"

The Justice: "Depraved— And you allowed it?"

The Father: "Her as well as another. It has to come—"

The Justice: "Then what have you to complain of?"

The Father: "Nothing! Oh! I complain of nothing, of nothing, only that he cannot get free of her when he wants to. I ask the protection of the law."

Madame Bascule: "These people weary me with their lies, Mr. Judge. I made a man of him—"

The Justice: "I see!"

Madame Bascule: "And now he denies me, leaves me, robs me of my property—"

Isidore: "It is not true, Mr. Judge. I wanted to leave her five years ago, seeing that she had fleshed up with excess, and that didn't suit me. It troubled me much. Why? I don't know. Then I told her I was going away. She wept like a gutter and promised me her property at Bec-de-Mortin to stay a few more years, if only four or five. As for me, I said 'Yes,' of course. And what would you have done? I stayed then five years day by day and hour by hour. I was free. Each to his own. I had paid well." [Isidore's wife, quiet up to this time, cries out with a piercing, parrot-like voice:]

"Look at her, look at her, Mr. Judge, that millstone, and see if it wasn't well paid for?"

The Father [raising his head with a convinced air]: "Indeed, yes, well paid for." [Madame Bascule sinks back upon her seat and begins to weep.]

The Justice [paternally]: "What can you expect, dear Madame? I can do nothing. You have given your land at Bec-de-Mortin away in a perfectly reg-

ular manner. It is his, it belongs to him. He had the incontestable right to do what he has done, and to give it as a marriage gift to his wife. I have not entered into the question of—of—delicacy. I can only lay bare the facts from the point of view of the law. There is nothing more for me to do."

The Father [in a fierce voice]: "Then I can go home again?"

The Justice: "Certainly." [They go out under the sympathetic gaze of the peasants, as people do who win their case. Madame Bascule sits in her seat sobbing.]

The Justice [smiling]: "Come, come, dear Madame, go home, now. And if I had any counsel to give you, I should say find another—another pupil—"

Madame Bascule [through her tears]: "I cannot—cannot find one—"

The Justice: "I regret not being able to point one out to you." [She throws a despairing look toward the Christ being tortured on the cross, then arises and walks away with little steps, hiccoughing with chagrin and concealing her face in her handkerchief.] The Justice adds in a bantering voice: "Calypso would not be consoled at the departure of Ulysses." Then in a grave tone, turning toward his clerk: "Call the next case."

The Clerk [mumbling]: "Celestin Polyte Lecacheur *vs.* Prosper Magloire Dieulafait—"

A PECULIAR CASE

WHEN Captain Hector Marie de Fontenne married Miss Laurine d'Estelle the parents and friends feared it would be a bad match.

Miss Laurine, pretty, thin, blond and confident, had at twelve the assurance of a woman of thirty. She was one of those precocious little Parisians who seem born with a full knowledge of life and of feminine tricks, with that audacity of thought, with that profound astuteness and suppleness of mind which make certain beings seem destined by fate to play with and deceive others, as they do. All their actions seem premeditated, their manner calculated, their words weighed with care, their whole existence a rôle which they are playing with people like themselves.

She was very charming and lively, with the liveliness that cannot restrain itself nor be calm, when something seems amusing or queer. She would laugh in the face of people in almost an impudent fashion,

but with so much grace that they were never angered. Then she was rich, very rich.

A priest served as intermediary when she married Captain de Fontenne. Brought up in a religious house. in a most austere fashion, this officer brought to his regiment the morals of the cloister, and very strict, intolerant principles. He was one of those men who invariably become either a saint or a nihilist, in whom ideas install themselves as absolute mistresses, whose beliefs are inflexible, whose resolutions are not to be shaken.

He was a large, dark, young man, serious, severe, ingenuous, of simple mind, curt, and obstinate, one of those men who pass through life without comprehending anything beneath them in variety or subtlety, who divine nothing, suspect nothing, and admit only what they think, what they judge, and what they believe, when some one differs from them.

Miss Laurine saw him, understood him immediately, and accepted him for her husband. They made an excellent pair. She was yielding, skillful, and wise, knowing how to show herself to best advantage, always ready in good works and at festivals, assiduous at church and at the theater, at once worldly and religious, with a little air of irony, and a twinkle in her eye when chatting gravely with her grave husband. She would relate to him all her charitable enterprises with all the priests of the parish and the vicinity, and she made use of these pious occupations in order to remain away from morning until night.

But sometimes, in the midst of the recital of some act of beneficence, a foolish laugh would seize her suddenly, a nervous laugh impossible to check. The

captain would look surprised, then disturbed, then a little shocked, as his wife would continue to laugh. When she became a little calm, he would ask: "What is the matter, Laurine?" And she would answer: "Nothing. It is only the memory of such a funny thing that happened to me!" And she would relate some story.

Then, during the summer of 1883, Captain Hector de Fontenne took part in the grand maneuvers of the thirty-second regiment of the army. One evening, as they camped on the edge of a town, after ten days of tent and open field, ten days of fatigue and privation, the comrades of the captain resolved to have a good dinner.

At first, Captain de Fontenne refused to accompany them; then, as his refusal surprised them, he consented. His neighbor at table, the governor of Favré, talking continually of military operations, the only thing that interested the captain, turned to him to drink glass after glass with him. It had been very hot, a heavy, parching, thirst-inspiring heat; and the captain drank without thinking or perceiving that a new gaiety had entered into him, a certain lively, burning joy, a happiness of being, full of awakened desires, of unknown appetites, and undefined hopes.

At the dessert he was tipsy. He talked and laughed and moved about, seized by a noisy drunkenness, the foolish drunkenness of a man ordinarily wise and tranquil.

Some one proposed to finish the evening at the theater. He accompanied his comrades. One of them recognized one of the actresses as some one he had

formerly loved, and a supper was planned where a part of the feminine *personnel* of the troupe assisted.

The captain awoke the next day in an unknown room, in the arms of a pretty little blond woman who said to him, on seeing him open his eyes: "Good morning, sweetheart!"

He could not comprehend, at first; then, little by little his memory returned, somewhat cloudy, however. Then he got up without saying a word, dressed himself, and emptied his purse on the chimney-piece. A shame seized him when he found himself standing up in position, his sword at his side, in this furnished room, where the rumpled curtains and sofa, marbleized with spots, had a suspicious appearance, and he dared not go out, since in descending the staircase he might meet some one, nor dared he pass before the *concierge* nor go out in the street in the eyes of neighbors and passers-by.

The woman kept saying: "What has come over you? Have you lost your tongue? You had it fast enough last evening! Oh! what a muzzle!"

He bowed to her ceremoniously and, deciding upon flight, reached his abode with great steps, persuaded that one could guess from his manner and his bearing and his countenance that he had come out of the house of some girl.

And then remorse tortured him; the harassing remorse of a rigid, scrupulous man. He confessed and went to communion, but he still was ill at ease, followed ever by the memory of his fall and by a feeling of debt, a sacred debt contracted against his wife.

He did not see her again until the end of the month, because she went to visit her parents during the encampment of the troops. She came back to him with open arms and a smile upon her lips. He received her with an embarrassed attitude, the attitude of a guilty man; and until evening, he scarcely talked with her.

When they found themselves alone, she asked him: "What is the matter with you, my dear; I find you very much changed."

He answered in a constrained tone: "Oh! nothing, my dear, absolutely nothing."

"Pardon me, but I know you so well, and I feel sure there is something, some care, some angry feeling, something, I know not what!"

"Oh! well, yes, there is something."

"And what is it?"

"It is impossible for me to tell you."

"To tell me? Why so? You disturb me."

"I have no reasons to give you. It is impossible for me to tell you."

She was seated upon a divan and he walked up and down before her with his hands behind his back, avoiding the look of his wife.

Then she said: "Let us see. It is necessary for me to make you confess, it is my duty that I exact from you the truth; it is also my right. You should no more have a secret from me than I should from you."

His back was turned to her, framed in the high window, as he said:

"My dear, there are some things which are better not told. That which vexes me is one of them."

She got up, crossed the room, took him by the arm, and, having forced him to turn around, placed her two hands upon his shoulders, then, smiling and cajoling, raised her eyes as she said:

"You see, Marie [she called him Marie in moments of tenderness] you could never conceal anything from me. I should believe you had done something bad."

He answered: "I have done something very bad."

She said gaily: "Oh! is it so bad as that? I am very much astonished at you!"

He responded quickly: "I shall say nothing further. It is useless to insist."

But she drew him to an armchair, forced him to sit down in it, then seated herself on his right knee and began kissing him with light, rapid kisses which just brushed the curled end of his mustache. Then she said:

"If you don't tell me, we shall always be angry."

Pierced by remorse and tortured by his anguish, he answered: "If I should tell you what I have done, you would never pardon me."

"On the contrary, my friend. I would pardon you immediately."

"No, it is impossible."

"I promise you."

"I tell you it is impossible!"

"I swear that I will pardon you."

"No, my dear Laurine, you never could."

"How simple you are, my friend, you cannot deny it! In refusing to tell me what you have done, you allow me to think you have done something abominable, and I shall think constantly about it, regretting

your silence as much as your unknown crime. While, if you speak frankly, I shall forget it all by to-morrow."

"It is because—"

"What?"

He blushed up to the ears and said: "I shall confess to you as I would to a priest, Laurine."

On her lips was the sudden smile that she had sometimes in listening, and with a little mocking tone she said: "I am all ears."

He began: "You know, my dear, that I am a sober man. I drink only red wine, and never liquors, as you know."

"Yes, I know."

"Well, imagine how I allowed myself to drink a little, one evening toward the end of our encampment, when I was very thirsty, very much worn out with fatigue, weary, and—"

"And you got tipsy? Oh! how hideous!"

"Yes, I was intoxicated," he replied, with a severe air.

"And now, were you wholly intoxicated, so that you couldn't walk?"

"Oh! no, not so much as that. But I lost my reason if not my equilibrium. I talked and laughed and made a fool of myself."

As he kept silent, she asked: "Is that all?"

"No."

"Ah! and after that?"

"After that I committed an infamous deed."

She looked at him, disturbed and troubled as well as somewhat excited.

"What then, my friend?"

"We had supper with—with some actresses—and I do not know how it was done, but—I have deceived you, Laurine!"

He made the statement in a grave, solemn tone. She gave a little toss to her head and her eye brightened with a sudden gaiety, a profound, irresistible gaiety. Then she said:

"You—you—you have—"

And a little dry, nervous laugh broke forth and glided between her teeth two or three times and prevented her from speaking. She tried to take him seriously, but each time she tried to pronounce a word, the laugh trembled at the bottom of her throat, leaped forth, was quickly stopped, but constantly reappeared, like gas in a bottle of champagne, pushing for escape until the froth can no longer be retained. She put her hands on her lips to calm herself, that she might restrain this unfortunate gaiety. But the laugh ran through her fingers, shaking her chest and bursting forth in spite of her. She stammered: "You—you—have deceived me— Ha—ha! ha!—ha! ha!—ha! ha!—ha! ha!"

And then she looked at him with a singular air, so mocking in spite of herself, that he was speechless, stupefied. And suddenly, as if able to contain herself no longer, she burst forth again, laughing with the kind of laugh that seemed like an attack of nerves. Little jerking cries issued from her mouth, coming, it seemed, from the depths of her lungs. His two hands supported her bosom, and she was almost suffocated with long whoops like the cough in whooping-cough.

With each effort that she made to calm herself a

new paroxysm would begin, and each word that she tried to utter was only a greater contortion.

"My—my—my—poor friend—ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—ha!"

He got up, leaving her alone upon the armchair, and becoming suddenly very pale, he said: "Laurine, this is more than unbecoming."

She stammered, in a delirium of laughter:

"What—do you want—I—I—I cannot—but—but you are so funny—ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha!"

He became livid and looked at her now with fixed eye, a strange thought awakening within him. Suddenly he opened his mouth as if to say something, but said nothing, then, turning on his heel, he went out and shut the door.

Laurine, doubled up, weak, and fainting, still laughed with a dying laugh, which occasionally took on new life, like the flame of a candle almost ready to go out.

A PRACTICAL JOKE

THE jokes that are played nowadays are somewhat dismal. They are not like the inoffensive, laughable jokes of our forefathers; still, there is nothing more amusing than to play a good joke on some one; to force them to laugh at their own foolishness and if they get angry, to punish them by playing a new joke on them.

I have played many a joke in my lifetime and I have had some played on me; some very good ones, too. I have played some very laughable ones and some terrible ones. One of my victims died of the consequences; but it was no loss to anyone. I will tell about it some day, but it will not be an easy task, as the joke was not at all a nice one. It happened in the suburbs of Paris and those who witnessed it are laughing yet at the recollection of it; though the victim died of it. May he rest in peace!

I will narrate two to-day. One in which I was the victim and another in which I was the instiga-

tor. I will begin with the former, as I do not find it so amusing, being the victim myself.

I had been invited by some friends in Picardie to come and spend a few weeks. They were fond of a joke like myself (I would not have known them had they been otherwise).

They gave me a rousing reception on my arrival. They fired guns, they kissed me, and made such a fuss over me that I became suspicious.

"Be careful, old fox," I said to myself, "there is something up."

During dinner they all laughed immoderately. I thought to myself, they are certainly projecting some good joke and intend to play it on me, for they laugh at nothing apparently. I was on my guard all evening and looked at everybody suspiciously, even at the servants.

When bedtime came, everybody escorted me to my room and bid me good night. I wondered why, and after shutting my door, I stood in the middle of the room with the candle in my hand. I could hear them outside in the hall, whisper and laugh; they were watching me no doubt. I looked at the walls, inspected the furniture, the ceiling, the floor, but I found nothing suspicious. I heard footsteps close to my door; surely they were looking through the key-hole. Then it struck me that perhaps my light would go out suddenly and I would be left in the dark, so I lighted all the candles and looked around once more; but I discovered nothing. After having inspected the windows and the shutters, I closed the latter with care, then I drew the curtains and placed a chair against them. If some one should try to come in that

way, I would be sure to hear them, I thought. Then I sat down cautiously. I thought the chair would give way beneath me, but it was solid enough. I did not dare to go to bed, but as it was getting late I realized that I was ridiculous. If they were watching me, as I supposed they were, they certainly must laugh heartily at my uneasiness, so I resolved to go to bed. Having made up my mind, I approached the alcove. The bed looked particularly suspicious to me and I drew the heavy curtains back, pulled on them, but they held fast. Perhaps a bucket of water is hidden on the top all ready to fall on me, or else the bed may fall apart as soon as I lie on it. I thought. I racked my brain to try and remember all the different jokes I had played on others, so as to guess what might be in store for me; I was not going to be caught, not I!

Suddenly, an idea struck me which I thought capital. I gently pulled the mattress off the bed and it came toward me, along with the sheets and blankets. I dragged them in the middle of the room, near the door, and made my bed up again the best way I could, put out all the lights, and felt my way into bed. I laid awake at least another hour, starting at every little sound, but everything seemed quiet, so I at last went to sleep.

I must have slept profoundly for some time, when suddenly I woke up with a start. Something heavy had fallen on me and at the same time, a hot liquid streamed all over my neck and chest, which made me scream with pain. A terrible noise filled my ears; as if a whole sideboard full of dishes had fallen in them. I was suffocating under the weight, so I

reached out my hand to feel the object and I felt a face, a nose, and whiskers. I gave that face a terrible blow with my fist; but instantaneously, I received a shower of blows which drove me out of bed in a hurry and out into the hall.

To my amazement, I found it was broad daylight and everybody coming up the stairs to find out the cause of the noise. What we found was the valet, sprawled out on the bed, struggling among the broken dishes and tray. He had brought me some breakfast and having encountered my improvised couch, had very unwillingly dropped the breakfast as well as himself on my face!

The precautions I had taken to close the shutters and curtains and to sleep in the middle of the room had been my undoing. The very thing I had so carefully avoided had happened.

They certainly had a good laugh on me that day!

The other joke I speak of dates back to my boyhood days. I was spending my vacation at home as usual, in the old castle in Picardie.

I had just finished my second term at college and had been particularly interested in chemistry and especially in a compound called *phosphure de calcium* which, when thrown in water, would catch fire, explode, followed by fumes of an offensive odor. I had brought a few handfuls of this compound with me, so as to have fun with it during my vacation.

An old lady named Mme. Dufour often visited us. She was a cranky, vindictive, horrid old thing. I do not know why, but somehow she hated me. She misconstrued everything I did or said and she never

missed a chance to tattle about me, the old hag! She wore a wig of beautiful brown hair, although she was more than sixty, and the most ridiculous little caps adorned with pink ribbons. She was well thought of because she was rich, but I hated her to the bottom of my heart, and I resolved to revenge myself by playing a joke on her.

A cousin of mine, who was of the same age as I, was visiting us and I communicated my plan to him; but my audacity frightened him.

One night, when everybody was downstairs, I sneaked into Mme. Dufour's room, secured a receptacle into which I deposited a handful of the calcium phosphate, having assured myself beforehand that it was perfectly dry, and ran to the garret to await developments.

Pretty soon I heard everybody coming upstairs to bed. I waited until everything was still, then I came downstairs barefooted, holding my breath, until I came to Mme. Dufour's door and looked at my enemy through the keyhole.

She was putting her things away, and having taken her dress off, she donned a white wrapper. She then filled a glass with water and putting her whole hand in her mouth as if she were trying to tear her tongue out, she pulled out something pink and white which she deposited in the glass. I was horribly frightened, but soon found it was only her false teeth she had taken out. She then took off her wig and I perceived a few straggling white hairs on the top of her head. They looked so comical that I almost burst out laughing. She kneeled down to say her prayers, got up and approached my instrument of

vengeance. I waited awhile, my heart beating with expectation.

Suddenly, I heard a slight sound; then a series of explosions. I looked at Mme. Dufour; her face was a study. She opened her eyes wide, then shut them, then opened them again and looked. The white substance was crackling, exploding at the same time, while a thick, white smoke curled up mysteriously toward the ceiling.

Perhaps the poor woman thought it was some satanic fireworks, or perhaps that she had been suddenly afflicted with some horrible disease; at all events, she stood there speechless with fright, her gaze riveted on the supernatural phenomenon. Suddenly, she screamed and fell swooning to the floor. I ran to my room, jumped into bed, and closed my eyes trying to convince myself that I had not left my room and had seen nothing.

"She is dead," I said to myself; "I have killed her," and I listened anxiously to the sound of footsteps. I heard voices and laughter and the next thing I knew my father was soundly boxing my ears.

Mme. Dufour was very pale when she came down the next day and she drank glass after glass of water. Perhaps she was trying to extinguish the fire which she imagined was in her, although the doctor had assured her that there was no danger. Since then, when anyone speaks of disease in front of her, she sighs and says:

"Oh, if you only knew! There are such strange diseases."

A STRANGE FANCY

It was at the end of the dinner opening the hunting season, at the house of Marquis de Bertrans. Eleven hunters, eight young women, and the doctor of the neighborhood were seated around the great illuminated table covered with fruits and flowers.

They came to speak of love, and a great discussion arose, the eternal discussion, as to whether one could love truly but once or many times. They cited examples of people who had never had but one serious love; they also cited other examples of others who had loved often, violently. The men, generally, pretended that the passion, like a malady, could strike the same person many times, and strike to kill if an obstacle appeared in his path. Although the point of view was not contestable, the women, whose opinion depended upon poesy more than on observation, affirmed that love, true love, the great love, could only fall once upon a mortal; that it was like a thunderbolt, this love, and that a heart once touched by it

remained ever after so vacant, ravaged, and burned out that no other powerful sentiment, even a dream, could again take root.

The Marquis, having loved much, combated this belief in lively fashion:

"I will tell you that one can love many times with all his strength and all his soul. You cite to me people who have killed themselves for love as proof of the impossibility of a second passion. I answer that if they had not been guilty of this foolishness of suicide, which removed them from all chance of another fall, they would have been healed; and they would have recommenced, again and again, until their natural death. It is with lovers as it is with drunkards. He who has drunk will drink — he who has loved will love. It is simply a matter of temperament."

They chose the doctor as arbitrator, an old Paris physician retired to the country, and begged him to give his opinion.

To be exact, he had none. As the Marquis had said, it is an affair of temperament.

"As for myself," he continued, "I have known of one passion which lasted fifty-five years without a day of respite, and which was terminated only by death."

The Marquis clapped his hands.

"This is beautiful," said a lady. "And what a dream to be so loved! What happiness to live fifty-five years enveloped in a deep, living affection! How happy and benign must be the life of one who is adored like that!"

The doctor laughed:

"In fact, Madame," said he, "you are deceived on that point, because the one loved was a man. You know him, it is Mr. Chouquet, the village pharmacist. And as for the woman, you knew her too, it is the old woman who put cane seats in chairs, and came every year to this house. But how can I make you comprehend the matter?"

The enthusiasm of the women fell. On their faces a look of disgust said: "Pooh!"—as if love could only strike those fine and distinguished creatures who were worthy of the interest of fashionable people.

The doctor continued:

"I was called, three months ago, to the bedside of this old woman. She was dying. She had come here in the old carriage that served her for a house, drawn by the nag that you have often seen, and accompanied by her two great black dogs, her friends and guard. The curate was already there. She made us the executors of her will, and in order to unveil the meaning of her testament, she related the story of her life. I have never heard anything more singular or more affecting.

"Her father made chair seats and so did her mother. She had never known a home in any one place upon the earth. As a little girl, she went around ragged and dirty. They would stop beside the road at the entrance to towns, unharness the horse and let him browse; the dog would go to sleep with his nose in his paws; the little one would play in the grass while the father and mother, under the shade of the elms bordering the roadside, would reseat all the old chairs in the neighborhood.

"No one ever talked in this ambulance dwelling.

After the necessary words to decide who should make the tour of the houses and who should call out the well-known: 'Chairs to mend!' they would sit down to plait the straw, face to face or side by side.

"When the child went too far away or struck up an acquaintance with some urchin in the village, the angry voice of the father would call her: 'You come back here, you brat!' And these were the only words of tenderness she ever heard.

"When she grew larger they sent her around to collect the worn-out chairs to be rebottomed. Then she made some acquaintances from place to place among the street children. Then it would be the parents of her new friends who would call brutally to their children: 'Will you come here, you scamp! Let me catch you talking to that barefoot again!'

"Often the boys would throw stones at her. Sometimes ladies would give her a few pennies and look at her closely.

"One day — she was then eleven years old — as they were passing through this place, she met the little Chouquet behind the cemetery, weeping because some comrade had stolen two sous from him. The tears of this little well-to-do citizen, one of those fortunate ones from whom in her queer noddle she had imagined herself cut off, one of those beings always content and joyous, quite upset her. She went up to him, and when she learned the cause of his trouble, she poured into his hands all her savings, seven sous, which he took quite naturally, drying his tears. Then, mad with joy, she had the audacity to embrace him. As he was counting the money attentively, he allowed her to do it. Seeing that she was

not repulsed nor beaten, she did the same thing again. She embraced him with arms and heart. Then she ran away.

"What could have taken place in her miserable head after that? Did she attach herself to this booby because she had sacrificed for him her vagabond fortune, or because she had given to him her first tender kiss? The mystery is the same for the small as for the great.

"For months she dreamed of this corner of the cemetery and of this boy. In the hope of seeing him again, she robbed her parents, keeping back a sou here and there, either from a chair seat or upon the provisions which she was sent to buy.

"When she returned here she had two francs in her pocket, but she only saw the little druggist very properly behind the big colored bottles of his father's shop, between a red decanter and a tapeworm. She loved him there still more, charmed, aroused to ecstasy by this glory of colored water, this apotheosis of shining crystal.

"This picture became an ineffaceable memory, and when she saw him, the following year, playing marbles near the school with his comrades, she threw herself upon him, seized him in her arms, and kissed him with such violence that he began to howl with fear. Then, in order to appease him, she gave him all her money—seventy cents, a real treasure which he looked at with bulging eyes.

"He took it and let her caress him as much as she wished.

"During the next four years she turned into his hand all her surplus, which he pocketed with a clear

conscience, in exchange for permitted kisses. There was sometimes fifteen cents, sometimes forty, and once only five and one-half — and she wept with pain and humiliation at this, but it had been a bad year. The last time there was a five-franc piece, a great round piece that made him laugh with content.

"She thought of nothing but him; and he waited her return with a certain impatience, running to meet her, which made the heart of the girl leap with joy.

"Then he disappeared. They sent him away to college. She found it out by skillful questioning. Then she used her diplomacy to change her parents' itinerary and make them pass through here in vacation. She succeeded but for one year; then for two years she did not see him; then she scarcely recognized him, so much was he changed; he was so large and handsome in his coat with the brass buttons, and so imposing. He feigned not to see her and passed proudly by near her.

"She wept over it for two days, and after that she suffered without ceasing.

"Every year she returned here, passing him without daring to bow, and without his deigning to raise his eyes to her. She loved him passionately. She said to me: 'Doctor, he is the only man I have seen on earth; I have not known that there are others existing.'

"Her parents died. She continued their trade, but took with her two dogs instead of one, two terrible dogs that no one would dare encounter.

"One day in entering this village, where her heart still remained, she perceived a young woman coming

out of the Chouquet shop on the arm of her well-beloved. It was his wife. He was married.

"That evening she threw herself into the pond on the mayor's estate. A drunken man got her out and took her to the pharmacy. Chouquet, the son, came down in his dressing-gown, to care for her; and, without appearing to recognize her, loosed her clothing and rubbed her, then said, in a hard voice: 'My! But you are foolish! It is not necessary to make a beast of yourself like this!'

"That was sufficient to cure her. He had spoken to her! She was happy for a long time.

"He wanted no remuneration for his services, but she insisted upon paying him well. And all her life was spent like this. She made chair seats and thought of Chouquet. Every year she saw him behind his large windows. She had the habit of buying from him all her medical needs. In this way she could see him near to, and speak to him, and still give him a little money.

"As I told you in the beginning, she died this spring. After having related her sad history, she begged me to give to him she had so patiently loved all the savings of her life, because she had worked only for him, she said, fasting even, in order to put aside, and to be sure that he would think of her at least once after she was dead.

"She then gave me two thousand three hundred and twenty-seven francs. I allowed the curate twenty-seven for burial, and carried off the rest when she had drawn her last breath.

"The next day, I took myself to the house of the Chouquets. They had just finished breakfast, sitting

opposite each other, large and red, smelling of their pharmaceutical products, important and satisfied.

"They made me be seated; they offered me a *kirsch* which I accepted; then I commenced my discourse in an emotional voice, persuaded that they were going to weep.

"When they understood that he had been loved by this vagabond, this chair mender, this rover, Chouquet bounced with indignation, as if she had robbed him of his reputation, of the esteem of honest people, of his honor, of something of that delicacy that was dearer to him than life.

"His wife, also exasperated, kept repeating: 'The beggar! The beggar! The beggar!' without being able to find any other word.

"He got up and walked around the table with long strides, his Greek cap tipped over his ear. He muttered: 'Think of it, Doctor! This is a horrible thing to happen to a man! What is to be done? Oh! if I had known this while she was alive I would have had her arrested and shut up in prison. And she wouldn't have got out, I can tell you!'

"I was stupefied at the result of my pious proceedings. I neither knew what to say nor what to do. But I had to complete my mission. I said: 'She has charged me to give you all her savings, which amount to two thousand three hundred francs. As what I have told you seems to be so very disagreeable to you, perhaps it would be better to give this money to the poor.'

"They looked at me, the man and the woman, impotent from shock. I drew the money from my

pocket, miserable money from all the country and of every mark, gold and sous mixed. Then I asked: 'What do you decide?'

"Mrs. Chouquet spoke first. She said: 'But since it was the last wish of this woman—it seems to me that it would be difficult to refuse it.'

"The husband, somewhat confused, answered: 'We could always buy with that money something for our children.'

"I remarked, dryly: 'As you wish.'

"He continued: 'Yes, give it to us, since she has put it in your charge. We can always find means of using it in some good work.'

"I laid down the money, bowed, and went out.

"The next day Chouquet came to me and said brusquely: 'She must have left a wagon here, that—that woman. What are you going to do with this wagon?'

"'Nothing,' said I, 'take it if you wish.'

"'Exactly. Just what I want. I will make a lean-to of it for my kitchen stove.'

"He was going, but I recalled him. 'She also left an old horse and her two dogs. Do you want them?'

"He stopped, surprised: 'Ah! no,' he answered, 'what could I do with them? Dispose of them as you wish.'

"Then he laughed and extended his hand which I took. What else could I do? In our country, a medical man and a druggist should not be enemies.

"I have kept the dogs at my house. The curate, who has a large yard, took the horse. The wagon

serves Chouquet as a cabin, and he has bought five railroad bonds with the money.

"This is the only profound love that I have met in my life."

The doctor was silent. Then the Marquis, with tears in his eyes, sighed: "Decidedly, it is only women who know how to love."

AFTER DEATH

All Veziers-le-Rethel had assisted at the funeral and interment of M. Badon-Leremince, and the last words of the discourse of the delegate of the district remained in the memory of all:

"He was an honest man, at least."

Honest man he had been in all the appreciable acts of his life; in his words, in his example, in his attitude, in his bearing, in his step, in the cut of his beard, and the form of his hats. He had never said a word that did not contain an example, never gave alms without accompanying it with advice, never held a hand without having the air of giving it a kind of benediction.

He left two children, a son and a daughter. His son was General Counselor, and his daughter, having married a notary, M. Poirel de la Voulte, held a high place in Veziers.

They were inconsolable at the death of their father, for they loved him sincerely.

As soon as the ceremonies were over, they returned to the house of death, and all three together, the son, the daughter, and the son-in-law, opened the will, whose seal was to be broken by them alone, and that only after the coffin had been placed in the earth. A direction upon the envelope expressed this wish.

It was M. Poirel de la Voulte who opened the paper, being accustomed to these things in the capacity of notary, and, having adjusted his eyeglasses over his eyes, he read, in a dull voice, made for particularizing contracts:

"My children, my dear children, I could not sleep tranquilly the eternal sleep if I did not make a confession to you from the other side of the tomb, the confession of a crime, remorse of which has rent my life. Yes, I have committed a crime, a frightful, abominable crime.

"I was twenty-six years old, had just been called to the bar in Paris, and was living the life of young people from the provinces, stranded, without acquaintances, friends, or parents in the city.

"I took a mistress. There are people who are indignant at this word, 'mistress,' but there are also beings who cannot live alone. I am one of these. Solitude fills me with a horrible agony, especially solitude in a lodging, before the fire in the evening. It seems to me then that I am alone upon earth, frightfully alone, surrounded by vague dangers, and terrible, unknown things; and the partition which separates me from my neighbor, from my neighbor whom I do not know, makes him as far removed as the stars that I see from my window. A sort of

fever invades me, a fever of impatience and fear; and the silence of the walls overpowers me. It is so profound, so sad, this silence of a room where one lives alone! It is a silence about the soul, and when the furniture cracks or starts, the courage wanes, for one expects no sound in this mournful dwelling-place.

"How many times, unnerved, frightened by this mute immobility, have I begun to speak, to pronounce some words, without sequence, without reason, in order to make some noise. My voice then appeared to me so strange that I was afraid of that also. Is there anything more frightful than talking alone in an empty house? The voice seems like that of another, an unknown voice, speaking without cause, to no one, into the hollow air, with no ear to listen, for one knows, before the words are uttered into the space of the apartment, what the lips are about to say. And when they resound lugubriously in the silence, they seem more like an echo, the echo of singular words pronounced low by the thoughts.

"I took a mistress, a young girl like all those young girls who live in Paris at some trade insufficient to support them. She was sweet, good, and simple. Her parents lived at Poissy. She went to stay a few days with them from time to time.

"For a year I lived tranquilly enough with her, fully decided to leave her when I should see some young person with whom I was well enough pleased to want to marry. I would leave to this one a small income, since it is admitted in our society that the love of a woman ought to be paid for, in money when she is poor, in jewels if she is rich

"But behold there came a day when she announced to me that she was *enceinte.* I was struck down, and perceived in an instant the ruin of my whole existence. The chain was apparent that I must drag to my dying day, in the near future, in my old age, always, the chain of a woman bound to my life by a child, the chain of a child whom it would be necessary to bring up, watch over, and protect, always concealing myself from him and him from the world. My mind was overturned by this news, and a confused desire, which I did not formulate, but which I felt in my heart, took to showing itself, like people concealed behind portières waiting until some one tells them to appear; a criminal desire that roamed around at the bottom of my thoughts: If some accident could happen! There are so many of these little beings who die before birth!

"Oh! I did not desire the death of my mistress. Poor girl, I loved her well! But I wished, perhaps, the death of the other before I had seen it.

"It was born. I had a household in my bachelor's quarters, a false household with a child—a horrible thing. It resembled all infants. I could scarcely love it. Fathers, you see, do not love until later. They have not the instinctive, surpassing love and tenderness of mothers; their affection is awakened little by little, as their mind is drawn toward their children each day in the bonds which unite living beings together.

"A year passed away. I now fled from my too small dwelling, where linen and blankets and stockings, the size of a pair of gloves, were dragging around and a thousand things of this kind were left

upon the furniture, especially upon the arm of the easy-chair. I fled particularly to escape from hearing him cry; for he cried at all times, when he was changed, when he was washed, when one touched him, when he was put to bed, when he was taken up, without ceasing.

"I had made some acquaintances, and had met her who was to become your mother. I came to love her and a desire to marry her was awakened in me. I paid her my court; I asked her in marriage; she accepted me.

"And now I found myself in this predicament: To marry, having a child, this young girl whom I adored, — or, to tell the truth and renounce her and happiness, the future, everything; for her parents, rigid and scrupulous people, would never give her to me if they knew.

"I passed one month of horrible anguish, of moral torture; a month where a thousand thoughts frightened and haunted me; and I felt growing in me a hate against my son, against this little piece of living, crying flesh who barred my way, ruined my life, and condemned me to an existence without hope, those vague hopes so charming to youth.

"At this time the mother of my companion fell ill and I remained alone with the infant. It was in December. It was terribly cold. What a night! My mistress had gone. I had dined in my narrow dining-room and then entered softly into the chamber where the little one slept.

"I seated myself in an armchair before the fire. The wind sighed, making the glass crack, a wind dry with frost, and I saw out of the window the

stars scintillating with that bright light which they have on frosty nights.

"Then the besetting thought which had haunted me for a month entered my head again. Whenever I remained still, it descended upon me, entered into me, and roamed about. It gnawed me as fixed ideas gnaw, as a cancer gnaws into the flesh. It was there, in my head, in my heart, in my entire body, it seemed to me, and it devoured me as if it had been a beast. I tried to drive it, push it away, to open my thoughts to other things, to new hopes, as one opens a window to the fresh air of morning to drive out the vitiated air of night; but I could not, even for a second, get it out of my brain. I know not how to express this torture. It gnawed at my soul; and I felt with a frightful grief, a physical and moral grief, each succeeding pang.

"My existence was ended! How could I ever get out of the situation? How draw away, or how confess?

"And I loved her who was to become your mother with a mad passion which this insurmountable obstacle further exaggerated.

"A terrible anger grew in me which tightened my throat, an anger which approached madness—mania! Surely, I was mad that night!

"The child slept. I arose and went and looked at him sleeping. There he was, this abortion, this larva, this nothing, who condemned me to a life of unhappiness without appeal.

"He slept, his mouth open, buried in the bedclothes, in a cradle near my bed, where I could not sleep myself!

"How did I accomplish what I did? Do I know? What force drove me, what power of malice possessed me? Oh! the temptation of the crime came to me, without announcing itself. I only recall that my heart was beating furiously. It beat so strongly that I heard it as one hears the blows of a hammer behind a partition wall. I only recall that! my heart beating! In my head there was a strange confusion, a tumult, a derangement of reason, of complete cold-bloodedness. I was in one of those frightful hours of hallucination when a man is no longer conscious of his acts, either in direction or will.

"I gently raised the covers which concealed the body of my child; I threw them upon the foot of the cradle, and looked at him all bare. He did not wake. Then I went toward the window very gently and opened it.

"A breath of cold air came in like an assassin, so cold that I drew back before it. The two candles flickered. And I remained there near the window for a long time, not daring to turn and see what was behind me, and feeling ever upon my forehead, my cheeks, my hands, the fatal air that was constantly gliding in. This lasted a long time.

"I did not reflect. I was thinking of nothing. Suddenly a little cough made a frightful shiver pass through me from head to foot, a shiver which I can feel at this moment at the roots of my hair. With a startled movement I closed brusquely the two sides of the window, and turning hastened to the cradle.

"He still slept, his mouth open, all bare. I touched his limbs; they were icy and I covered him again. My heart seemed suddenly to break and tc

be filled with pity and tenderness for this poor little innocent being whom I had wished to kill. I kissed him over and over again upon his fine hair. Then I returned and seated myself before the fire.

"I thought with horror of what I had done, and asked myself whence came these tempests of the soul when man loses all notion of things, all control of himself, and moves in a sort of fearful drunkenness, without knowing what he does, without knowing where he goes, like a ship in a hurricane.

"The child coughed once again and I felt torn to the heart. If he should die! My God, my God! what would become of me?

"I got up and went to look at him; and, with a candle in my hand, I bent over him. Seeing him breathe tranquilly, I was reassured, even when he coughed for the third time. But I felt such a shock, and made such a movement to arrest it (as one does at the sight of some frightful thing) that I let the candle fall.

"And, straightening myself, after having picked it up, I perceived that my temples were moistened with sweat, with a sweat hot and cold at the same time, which produced an agony of the soul like that of some frightful moral suffering, or some unnamable torture, burning like fire, and cold as ice, piercing the bones and the skin of my head.

"I remained bending over my son until daybreak, calming myself when he was quiet and transfixed by an abominable grief when a feeble cough came from his mouth.

"He awoke with red eyes, an inflamed throat, and difficult breathing. When my wife entered the house

and saw him, we sent immediately for a physician. He came in an hour and asked, after having examined him:

"'Has he taken cold?'

"I began to tremble as very old people tremble, and stammered:

"'No, I think not.' Then I asked:

"'What is the matter? Is it anything grave?'

"He answered:

"'I cannot say yet. I will return this evening.'

"He returned in the evening. My son had passed nearly the whole day in an invincible sleepiness, coughing from time to time. A congestion of the lungs now showed itself.

"This lasted ten days. I cannot express what I suffered during those interminable hours which separate the morning from evening and the evening from the morning.

"He died—

"And since—since that moment, I have not passed an hour, no, not an hour without that atrocious, cutting memory, a memory which gnaws, which tortures and rends the mind, and stirs in me like a writhing beast chained up in the bottom of my soul.

"Oh! if I could have become mad!"

M. Poirel de la Voulte put up his glasses, a movement which was usual with him when he had finished reading a contract, and the three heirs of the dead man looked at each other without saying a word, pale and immovable. At the end of a minute the notary said:

"This must be destroyed."

The two others lowered their head in sign of assent. He lighted a candle, separated carefully the pages which contained the dangerous confession from the pages which contained the disposition of the money, then he presented them to the flame and threw them into the fireplace.

And they watched the white leaves as they were consumed. Soon they were nothing more than a lot of little black heaps. And as they still perceived some letters which were legible on the paper, the daughter crushed it with the end of her foot, mixing it with the old ashes.

Then they all three remained quiet for some time looking at it, as if they feared that the charred secret might fly away up the chimney.

A MATTER OF BUSINESS

THE name Brument (Cæsar Isidore) and the name Cornu (Prosper Napoleon) appeared before the Court of Assizes of the Lower-Seine under the charge of attempted murder, by immersion, of the Brument woman, legitimate wife of the first of the prisoners. The two accused were seated side by side upon the traditional bench. They were two peasants. The first was short, fat, with short arms and legs and a round, red, blossoming head, planted directly upon his back, which was round also, and short, without any appearance of a neck. He was a pig-raiser and dwelt in Cachville-la-Goupil, district of Criquetot.

Cornu (Prosper Napoleon) was thin, of medium height, with enormous arms. His head was awry, his jaw twisted, and he squinted. A blue blouse as long as a chemise fell about his knees, and his yellow hair, thin and pasted to his cranium, gave to his features a worn-out, dirty appearance, and an expression altogether frightful. He was nicknamed "The Curate" because he knew how to imitate to perfection

the chants of the church, and even the noise of the serpent. This talent attracted people to his bar, for he was a tavern-keeper at Criquetot, a large number preferring "Cornu's mass" to the Mass of the Good God.

Mrs. Brument, seated on the witness bench, was a thin peasant woman who always seemed half asleep. She remained motionless, her hands crossed upon her knees, with fixed look and stupid appearance.

The President continued the questioning:

"So then, Mrs. Brument, they entered your house and threw you into a barrel of water? State the facts in detail. Rise."

She rose and seemed as tall as a mast, with her bonnet, which was only a stiff white skullcap. She made her explanations in a drawling voice:

"I was shelling some beans when they came in. I said to myself: 'What is the matter with them. They are not natural; there is some mischief.' They watched me, like this, crosswise, especially Cornu, seeing that he squints. I never like to see them together, because it means no good to the neighborhood. I said to them: 'What's the matter with you?' They did not answer. I had almost a suspicion—"

The prisoner Brument interrupted the deposition with vivacity, declaring:

"I was drunk."

Then Cornu, turning toward his accomplice, said in a deep voice with the tone of an organ:

"Say that I was drunk, too, and you will not lie."

The President [with severity]: "You wish to state that you were drunk?"

Brument: "That is not demanded."

Cornu: "That can happen to anybody."

The President [to the victim]: "Continue your deposition, Mrs. Brument."

"Then up steps Brument and says to me: 'Do you want to earn a hundred sous?' 'Yes,' said I, seeing that a hundred sous are not found in every footprint of a horse. Then he said to me: 'Open your eye and do like me.' And he went for the big barrel that is under the gutter at the corner of the house; and then he turned it over and brought it into my kitchen and planted it right in the middle of the floor, and then he said to me: 'You go and bring water enough to make this full.'

"Then you might see me going to the pond with two buckets bringing water, and still bringing water, for the good part of an hour, seeing that this barrel was as large as a vat, saving your presence, Mr. President.

"During this time, Brument and Cornu they drank a glass and still another glass and still another. They had finished their talk, when I said to them: 'You two are full, as full as this barrel.' And it was Brument that answered: 'Don't you worry, go your way; your turn will come; each to his own count.' As for me, I paid no attention to his talk, seeing that he was drunk.

"When the barrel was full up I said: 'There, it is done.'

"And then Cornu gave me a hundred sous. Not Brument, but Cornu; it was Cornu that gave them to me. And Brument says to me: 'Do you want to earn another hundred sous?' 'Yes,' I said, seeing

that I am not accustomed to finds like that. Then he said to me: 'Undress yourself.'

"'Why undress myself?'

"'Yes,' he says to me.

"'Just how much shall I undress myself?'

"He said to me: 'If that troubles you, keep on your chemise, we make no objection to that.'

"A hundred sous are a hundred sous, and so I began to undress myself, although I would not undress before those two for nothing. I took off my cap, and then my bodice, and then my skirt, and then my shoes. Brument said to me: 'Look out, now, what you do; we're good children.'

"And Cornu answered: 'Yes, we're good children.'

"Then there I was, almost like our mother Eve. And they got up, as well as they could, for they were drunk, saving your presence, Mr. President.

"I said to myself: 'What are these two contriving?'

"And Brument said: 'Is it all right now?'

"Cornu said: 'All right!'

"And then they took me. Brument by the head and Cornu by the feet, as they would take, we might say, a piece of cloth to the bleach. As for me, I bawled.

"And Brument said to me: 'Keep still, poor thing!'

"And they took me under their arms, and threw me into the barrel which was full of water, till I had a turn of the blood and a coldness to my very insides.

"And Brument said: 'Is that all?'

"Cornu said: 'That's all!'

"Brument said: 'The head is not in; that counts.'

"Cornu said: 'Put the head in, then.'

"And then Brument pushed my head down until I nearly was drowned, the water came so into my nose, and I saw paradise already. Then he gave me one more push and I disappeared. And then it was that they had a fear, and they pulled me out and said to me: 'Go, dry yourself, quick, carcass.'

"I escaped and began to run as fast as I could to the house of the curate, who lent me one of his servant's petticoats, seeing I was almost as nature made me, and he went to find master Chicot the officer, who would get some policeman from Criquetot to take me home. There I found Brument and Cornu quarreling like two rams.

"Brument bellowed: 'It's not true; I tell you that it is at least a cubic meter. It was not a good way, anyhow.'

"Cornu bellowed, then: 'Four buckets, that makes just about half a cubic meter. There's no more to be said about it.'

"Then the officer put his hand on them, and that's all I know of it."

She was seated. The audience laughed. The jury looked at each other in amazement. The judge said:

"Prisoner Cornu, you seem to be the instigator of this infamous business, explain yourself."

And Cornu, in his turn, stood up:

"Mr. President, I was drunk."

The President replied, gravely: "I know that; continue."

"I'm going to. Now, Brument came to my place about nine o'clock, and called for two drinks, and he said to me: 'Here's one for you, Cornu.' And I sat down opposite him, and I drank, out of politeness,

and then I offered him another. Then he responded, and I too, so that, turn and turn about, toward midnight we got tipsy.

"Then Brument began to cry. I noticed it and asked him what the matter was. He told me he must have a thousand francs by Thursday. Then I got a little cold, you understand. And as quickly as hay burns, he proposed to me: 'I'll sell you my wife.'

"I was drunk, and I'm a widower. You can understand, the idea struck me. I did not know her, but a woman is a woman, isn't that so? And I asked him: 'How much will you sell her for?'

"He thought, or seemed to be thinking over it some time. When a man is drunk, he is not clear, but he finally said: 'I'll sell her to you by the cubic measure.'

"I was not astonished at that, seeing I was as drunk as he was and that cubic measure was known to me in my trade. 'That's the same as a thousand liters,' said I. 'It is agreed.'

"Now only the price remained to be settled. All depends on the quality. So I asked: 'How much a cubic measure?'

"He answered: 'Two thousand francs.'

"I made a jump like a rabbit, and then I reflected that a woman would not likely measure more than three hundred liters. All the same, I said: 'That's too dear.'

"He replied: 'I couldn't trade for less, I should lose.'

"You understand; a man is not in the hog business for nothing. He knows his trade. But if it comes to strings, or just lard, I am keen myself,

seeing that it is just in my line— Ha! ha! ha! Then I said to him: 'If she was new, I'd have nothing to say; but she has served you, and this is secondhand. I will give you five hundred francs a cubic measure, and not a sou more— Does it go?'

"He answered: 'It goes. A drink on it!'

"I drink with him and we go out arm in arm. It is a good thing for a man to have a helpmeet in life. But one fear comes to me: How were we to measure her in liquid measure?

"Then he explained his idea to me, with some trouble, seeing he was drunk. Said he: 'I take a barrel and I fill it full up with water. Then I put her in. All of the water that goes out I measure, and that makes the count.'

"I said to him: 'I see that; and understand it. But when the water has gone out it runs away; how will you be able to get it again?'

"Then he took me by the shirt front and explained to me that it would only be necessary to refill the barrel of the deficit that the woman had displaced. The amount put in would be the measure. I suppose ten buckets, that is a cubic meter. Oh, he is no fool, even when he is drunk, that donkey there!

"In short, we went to his house, and I looked at her particularly. As for her being a pretty woman, she is not a pretty woman; everybody can see that, since she is here. I said to myself: 'Done again, but that doesn't matter, it all counts; beautiful or plain, she is nevertheless just as useful,' not so, Mr. President? And then I take note that she is thin as a pole and I say to myself: 'There aren't above four hundred liters there.' I knew that, being in liquids.

"The operation she has described to you. I even left the stockings and the chemise on, to my disadvantage. When it was over we found she had gone. I said: 'Look here, Brument, she has escaped.'

"He replied: 'Have no fear, I can always catch her again. She will have to come home to sleep. Let's measure the deficit—'

"We measured. Not quite four buckets. Ha! ha! ha!"

The prisoner began to laugh with so much persistence that an officer was obliged to touch him on the shoulder. Calming himself, he continued:

"Briefly, Brument then declared: 'That is not right. It's not enough.' As for me, I howled and howled and howled again. He struck and I hit back. This might have lasted until the last judgment, as I was drunk, you see. But then came the policeman! He swore at us and took advantage of us. Then prison! I demand damages."

He was seated.

Brument declared the statement of his accomplice true on all points. The jury, in consternation, retired to deliberate. They returned at the end of an hour and acquitted the prisoners, with a severe reprimand based upon the majesty of marriage, and establishing the precise limitations of commercial transactions.

Brument went his way toward the conjugal abode with his wife. Cornu returned to his business.

ON CATS

CAPE OF ANTIBES.

SEATED on a bench, the other day at my door, in the full sunlight, with a cluster of anemones in flower before me, I read a book recently published, an honest book, something uncommon and charming,—"The Cooper" by George Duval. A large white cat that belonged to the gardener jumped upon my lap, and by the shock closed the book, which I placed at my side in order to caress the animal.

The weather was warm; a faint suggestive odor of new flowers was in the air, and at times came little cool breezes from the great white summits that I could see in the distance. But the sun was hot and sharp, and the day was one of those that stir the earth, make it alive, break open the seed in order to animate the sleeping germs, and cleave the buds so that the young leaves may spring forth. The cat rolled itself on my knees, lying on its back, its paws in the air, with claws protruding, then receding. The little creature showed its pointed teeth beneath its lips,

and its green eyes gleamed in the half-closed slit of its eyelids. I caressed and rubbed the soft, nervous animal, supple as a piece of silk, smooth, warm, delicious, dangerous. She purred with satisfaction, yet was quite ready to scratch, for a cat loves to scratch as well as to be petted. She held out her neck and rolled again, and when I took my hand from her, she raised herself and pushed her head against my lifted hand.

I made her nervous, and she made me nervous also, for, although I like cats in a certain way, I detest them at the same time,—those animals so charming and so treacherous. It gives me pleasure to fondle them, to rub under my hand their silky fur that sometimes crackles, to feel their warmth through this fine and exquisite covering. Nothing is softer, nothing gives to the skin a sensation more delicate, more refined, more rare, than the warm, living coat of a cat. But this living coat also communicates to me, through the ends of my fingers, a strange and ferocious desire to strangle the animal I am caressing. I feel in her the desire she has to bite and scratch me. I feel it,—that same desire, as if it were an electric current communicated from her to me. I run my fingers through the soft fur and the current passes through my nerves from my finger-tips to my heart, even to my brain; it tingles throughout my being and causes me to shut my teeth hard.

And if the animal begins to bite and scratch me, I seize her by the neck, I give her a turn and throw her far from me, as I would throw a stone from a sling, so quickly and so brutally that she never has time to revenge herself.

I remember that when I was a child I loved cats, yet I had even then that strange desire to strangle them with my little hands; and one day at the end of the garden, at the beginning of the woods, I perceived suddenly something gray rolling in the high grass. I went to see what it was, and found a cat caught in a snare, strangling, suffocating, dying. It rolled, tore up the ground with its claws, bounded, fell inert, then began again, and its hoarse, rapid breathing made a noise like a pump, a frightful noise which I hear yet. I could have taken a spade and cut the snare, I could have gone to find the servant or tell my father. No, I did not move, and with beating heart I watched it die with a trembling and cruel joy. It was a cat! If it had been a dog, I would rather have cut the copper wire with my teeth than let it suffer a second more. When the cat was quite dead, but yet warm, I went to feel of it and pull its tail!

These little creatures are delicious, notwithstanding, delicious above all, because in caressing them, while they are rubbing against our skin, purring and rolling on us, looking at us with their yellow eyes which seem never to see us, we realize the insecurity of their tenderness, the perfidious selfishness of their pleasure.

Some women, also, give us that sensation,—women who are charming, tender, with clear yet false eyes, who have chosen us entirely for their gratification. Near them, when they open their arms and offer their lips, when a man folds them to his heart with bounding pulses, when he tastes the joy of their delicate caress, he realizes well that he holds a per-

fidious, tricky cat, with claws and fangs, an enemy in love, who will bite him when she is tired of kisses.

Many of the poets have loved cats. Baudelaire has sung of them divinely.

I had one day the strange sensation of having inhabited the enchanted palace of the White Cat, a magic castle where reigned one of those undulant, mysterious, troubling animals, the only one, perhaps, of all living creatures that one never hears walk.

This adventure occurred last year on this same shore of the Mediterranean. At Nice there was atrocious heat, and I asked myself as to whether there was not, somewhere in the mountains above us, a fresh valley where one might find a breath of fresh air.

Thorence was recommended to me, and I wished to see it immediately. To get there I had first to go to Grasse, the town of perfumes, concerning which I shall write some day, and tell how the essences and quintessences of flowers are manufactured there, costing up to two thousand francs the liter. I passed the night in an old hotel of the town, a poor kind of inn, where the quality of the food was as doubtful as the cleanliness of the rooms. I went on my way in the morning.

The road went straight up into the mountains, following the deep ravines, which were overshadowed by sterile peaks, pointed and savage. I thought that my advisers had recommended to me a very extraordinary kind of summer excursion, and I was almost on the point of returning to Nice the same day, when I saw suddenly before me, on a mountain which ap-

peared to close the entrance to the entire valley, an immense and picturesque ruined castle, showing towers and broken walls, of a strange architecture, in profile against the sky. It proved to be an ancient castle that had belonged to the Templars, who, in bygone days, had governed this country of Thorence.

I made a detour of this mountain, and suddenly discovered a long, green valley, fresh and reposeful. Upon its level were meadows, running waters, and willows; and on its sides grew tall pine-trees. In front of the ruins, on the other side of the valley, but standing lower, was an inhabited castle, called the Castle of the Four Towers, which was built about the year 1530. One could not see any trace of the Renaissance period, however. It was a strong and massive square structure, apparently possessing tremendous powers of resistance, and it was supported by four defensive towers, as its name would indicate.

I had a letter of introduction to the owner of this manor, who would not permit me to go to the hotel. The whole valley is one of the most charming spots in summer that one could dream of. I wandered about there until evening, and after dinner I went to the apartment that had been reserved for me. I first passed through a sort of sitting-room, the walls of which were covered by old Cordova leather; then I went through another room, where, by the light of my candle, I noticed rapidly, in passing, several old portraits of ladies — those paintings of which Théophile Gautier has written.

I entered the room where my bed was, and looked around me. The walls were hung with antique tapestries, where one saw rose-colored donjons in blue land-

scapes, and great fantastic birds sitting under foliage of precious stones! My dressing-room was in one of the towers. The windows wide on the inside and narrowed to a mere slit on the outside, going through the entire thickness of the walls, were, in reality, nothing but loopholes, through which one might kill an approaching enemy.

I shut my door, went to bed, and slept. Presently I dreamed; usually one dreams a little of something that has passed during the day. I seemed to be traveling; I entered an inn, where I saw at a table before the fire a servant in complete livery, and a mason,—a strange association which did not astonish me. These people spoke of Victor Hugo, who had just died, and I took part in their conversation. At last I went to bed in a room, the door of which I could not shut; and suddenly, I saw the servant and the mason, armed with sabers, coming softly toward my bed.

I awoke at once, and a few moments passed before I could recollect where I was. Then I recalled quickly my arrival of the day before at Thorence, the occurrences of the evening, and my pleasant reception by the owner. I was just about to close my eyes, when I saw distinctly in the darkness, in the middle of my room, at about the height of a man's head, two fiery eyes watching me.

I seized a match, and while striking it I heard a noise, a light, soft noise, like the sound of a wet rag thrown on the floor, but after I had lighted the candle I saw nothing but a tall table in the middle of the room. I rose, went through both apartments, looked under the bed and into the closets, and found noth-

ing. I thought then that perhaps I had continued dreaming after I was awake, and so I went to sleep again, but not without trouble.

I dreamed again. This time I traveled once more, but in the Orient, in the country that I love. I arrived at the house of a Turk, who lived in the middle of a desert. He was a superb Turk,—not an Arab, but a Turk, fat, friendly, and charming. He was dressed in Turkish attire, with a turban on his head, and a whole shopful of silk on his back,—a real Turk of the Théâtre Français, who made me compliments while offering me sweetmeats, sitting on a voluptuous divan.

Then a little black boy took me to a room—all my dreams ended in this fashion in those days! It was a perfumed room decorated in sky blue, with skins of wild beasts on the floor, and before the fire, —the idea of fire pursued me even in the desert,— on a low chair, was a woman, lightly clothed, who was waiting for me. She was of the purest Oriental type, with stars tattooed on her cheeks and forehead and chin; she had immense eyes, a beautiful form, and slightly brown skin,—a warm and exciting skin.

She looked at me, and I thought: "This is what I understand to be the true meaning of the word hospitality. In our stupid and prudish northern countries, with their hateful mawkishness of ideas, and silly notions of morality, a man would never receive a stranger in this fashion."

I went up to the woman and spoke to her, but she replied only by signs, not knowing a word of my language, which the Turk, her master, understood so well. All the happier that she would be

silent, I took her by the hand and led her toward my couch, where I placed myself by her side. . . .

But one always awakens at those moments! So I opened my eyes and was not greatly surprised to feel beneath my hand something soft and warm, which I caressed lovingly. Then, my mind clearing, I recognized that it was a cat, a big cat rolled up against my cheek, sleeping there with confidence. I left it there and composed myself to sleep once more. When daylight appeared he was gone; and I really thought I had dreamed he had been with me; for I could not understand how he could have come in and gone out, as my door was locked.

When I related my dream and my adventure to my agreeable host (not the whole of it!) he began to laugh, and said: "He came in through his own door," and raising a curtain, he showed me a little round hole in the wall. I learned then that the old habitations of this country have long narrow runways through the walls, which go from the cellar to the garret, from the servants' rooms to the rooms of the *seigneur*, and these passages render the cat king and master of the interior of the house. He goes where it pleases him, visits his domain at his pleasure, sleeps in all the beds, sees all, hears all, knows all the secrets, all the habits, all the shames of the house. Everywhere he is at home, the animal that moves without noise, the silent prowler, the nocturnal rover of the hollowed walls. And I thought of Baudelaire.

ROOM NO. ELEVEN

"WHAT! You do not know why President Amandon was removed?"

"No, not at all."

"As far as he is concerned, it would never have been known. But it is a story of the strangest sort."

"Relate it to me."

"You remember Mrs. Amandon, that pretty brunette, thin, and so distinguished and pretty that she was called Madame Marguerite in all Perthuis-le-Long?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Very well, then. You recall also how much she was respected and considered, and better loved than anyone in the town; she knew how to receive, how to organize a festival or a charity fair, how to find money for the poor, and how to please the young people in a thousand ways.

"She was very elegant and very coquettish, nevertheless, but in a Platonic fashion, and with the

charming elegance of the provinces, for she was a provincial, this pretty little woman, an exquisite provincial.

"The poets and writers who are all Parisian sing to us of the Parisian woman and of her charm, because they know only her; but I declare here that the provincial is worth a hundred times more when she is of superior quality.

"The provincial has an attraction all her own; she is more discreet than the Parisian, more humble, promising nothing and giving much, while the Parisian for the most part, promises much and gives nothing but deshabille.

"The Parisian is a triumph in the elegant effrontery of falseness; the provincial, an example of the modesty of truth.

"Yet the provincial, with her air of homely alertness, her deceitful, schoolgirl candor, her smile which means nothing, and her good little passions, direct and tenacious, is capable of a thousand times more deceit, artifice, and feminine invention than all the Parisians together, for gratifying her own tastes or vices, and that without awakening suspicion, or scandal, or gossip in the little town which watches her with all its eyes from all its windows.

"Mrs. Amandon was a type of this rare race, but charming. Never had anyone suspected her, never had anyone thought that her life was not as limpid as her look, a sly look, transparent and warm, but seemingly so honest—you should have seen it!

"Then she had admirable tact, a marvelous ingenuity and power of invention, and unbelievable simplicity.

"She picked all her lovers from the army and kept them three years, the time of their sojourn in the garrison. In short, she not only had love, she had sense.

"When some new regiment arrived at Perthuis-le-Long, she carefully observed all the officers between thirty and forty years of age—for, before thirty one is not discreet, and after forty, one is often feeble.

"Oh! she knew the list of officers as well as the colonel. She knew all, all the habits, manners, instruction, education, physical qualities, the power of resistance to fatigue, the character, whether patient or violent, the fortune, and the tendency to closeness or prodigality of each of them. Then she made her choice. She gave the preference to men of calm allurement, like herself, but they must be handsome. She also wished them to have had no previous entanglements, any passion having the power to leave traces, or that had made any trouble. Because the man whose loves are mentioned is never a very discreet man.

"After having decided upon the one she would love for the three years of his regulation sojourn, it only remained to throw down the gauntlet.

"While some women would find themselves embarrassed, would have taken ordinary means, following the way of others, having court paid them in marked-off stages of conquest and resistance, allowing her fingers to be kissed one day, her wrist the next, her cheek the following, then the lips, then the rest, she had a method more prompt, more discreet, and more sure. She gave a ball.

"The chosen officer was invited to dance with the mistress of the house. Then, in waltzing, led on by the rapid movement, bewildered by the intoxication of the dance, she would throw herself against him as if giving herself, and hold his hand with a nervous, continued pressure.

"If he did not comprehend, he was only a fool, and she passed on to the next, classed as number two, on the list of her desires.

"If he comprehended, the thing was done, without fuss, without compromising gallantries, without numerous visits.

"What could be more simple or more practical?

"How women might make use of a process similar to this to make us understand their pleasure! How much it would suppress difficulties, hesitations, and trouble from misunderstandings! How often we pass by, without knowing it, a possible happiness,—without suspecting it, because we are unable to penetrate the mystery of thought, the secret abandon of the will, the mute appeal of the flesh, the unknown soul of a woman whose mouth preserves silence, whose eye is impenetrable and clear.

"When the chosen one comprehended, he asked for a rendezvous. But she always made him wait a month or six weeks in order to watch and be sure that he had no dangerous faults.

"During this time he was racking his brain to think of some place where they could meet without peril, and imagining combinations difficult and unsafe.

"Then, at some official feast, she would say to him in a low voice:

"'Come Tuesday evening, at nine o'clock, to the Golden Horse hotel near the ramparts, on the Vouziers road, and ask for Miss Clarisse. I shall be waiting for you. And be sure to be in civil dress.'

"For eight years she had in fact rented this furnished room by the year, in this obscure inn. It was an idea of her first lover which she found practical, and after the man departed, she kept the nest.

"Oh! it was a mediocre nest; four walls covered with gray paper adorned with blue flowers, a pine bedstead under muslin curtains, an armchair bought at her order by the innkeeper's wife, two chairs, and some necessary articles for the toilette,—what more was needed?

"Upon the walls were three large photographs. Three colonels on horseback; the colonels of her lovers! Why not? It would not do to preserve the true likeness, the exact likeness, but she could perhaps keep some souvenirs by proxy.

"And she had never been recognized by anyone in all these visits to the Golden Horse, you ask?

"Never, by anyone!

"The means she employed were admirable and simple. She had thought out and organized some charity reunions and religious meetings, some of which she attended, others she did not. Her husband, knowing her good works, which cost him dear, lived without suspicions. Then, when a rendezvous had been agreed upon, she would say at dinner, before the servants:

"'I am going this evening to the Association for making flannel bandages for old paralytics.'

"And she went out about eight o'clock, went straight to the Association, came out again very soon, passed through divers streets, and, finding herself alone in some little street, in some somber corner without a light, she would take off her hat, replace it by a maid's cap which she carried under her mantle, fold a kerchief after the same fashion and tie it over her shoulders, carrying her hat and the garment she had worn in a napkin; she would go trotting along, full of courage, the hips uncovered, like a good little maid that had been sent upon some errand; and sometimes she would even run, as if she were in a great hurry.

"Who could have recognized in this trim servant the lively wife of President Amandon?

"She would arrive at the Golden Horse, go up to her room, of which she had the key, and the big proprietor, master Trouveau, seeing her pass his desk, would murmur:

"'There is Miss Clarisse coming to meet some lover.'

"He had indeed guessed something, the rogue, but did not try to learn more, and he would certainly have been much surprised to find that his client was Mrs. Amandon, or Madame Marguerite, as she was called in Perthuis-le-Long. And this is how the horrible discovery took place.

"Never had Miss Clarisse come to her meeting place two evenings in succession, never! being too nice and too prudent for that. And master Trouveau knew this well, since not once in eight years had he seen her come the next day after a visit. Often, therefore, in days of need, he had disposed of her room for a night.

"Now, sometime last summer, Mr. Amandon, the trustful president, absented himself from home for a week. It was in July. Madame was ardently in love, and as there was no fear of being surprised, she asked her lover, the handsome Commander Varangelles, one Tuesday evening on leaving him, if he wished her to return the next day.

"He replied: 'With all my heart!'

"And it was agreed that they should return at the usual hour on Wednesday. She said to him in a low tone:

"'If you arrive first, my dear, you can wait for me in bed.'

"Then they embraced and separated. The next day, as master Trouveau sat reading the 'Perthuis Tablet,' the Republican organ of the town, he cried out to his wife, who was plucking a fowl in the courtyard:

"'Here! the cholera has broken out in the country. There was a man died yesterday of it in Vauvigny.' But he thought no more about it, his inn being full of people, and business very good.

"Toward noon a traveler presented himself on foot, a kind of tourist, who ordered a good breakfast, after having drank two absinthes. And, as he was very warm, he absorbed a bottle of wine and two bottles of water at least. Then he took his coffee and his little glass, or rather three little glasses. And feeling a little heavy, he asked for a room where he might sleep for an hour or two. There was no longer a vacant room, and the proprietor, after consulting his wife, gave him Miss Clarisse's.

"The man went in there and, toward five o'clock, as he had not been seen to come out, the landlord

went to wake him. What was his astonishment to find him dead!

"The innkeeper descended to find his wife: 'Say,' he whispered to her, 'the tourist I put in number 11, I believe is dead.'

"She raised her arms, crying: 'It's not possible! Lord God! It is the cholera!'

"Master Trouveau shook his head:

"'I should sooner believe that it was a cerebral congestion, seeing that he is as black as the dregs of wine.'

"But the mistress was frightened and kept repeating:

"'It is not necessary to say, it is not necessary to say that we think it is cholera. Go and make the report and say nothing. They will take him away in the night, and no one will know about it. What is neither seen nor heard perplexes nobody.'

"The man murmured: 'Miss Clarisse was here yesterday, the room will be free this evening.'

"And he found the doctor who made out the certificate, 'From congestion after a copious repast.' Then he made an agreement with the commissioner of police to remove the dead body toward midnight, that there might be no suspicion about the hotel.

"It was scarcely nine o'clock when Madame Amandon went secretly up the staircase of the Golden Horse, without being seen by anyone. She reached her room, opened the door, and entered. A candle was burning upon the chimney-piece. She turned toward the bed. The Commander, she thought, was already there and had closed the curtains.

"She said to him: 'One minute, dearie, and I will be there.'

"And she disrobed with a feverish haste, throwing her boots upon the floor and her corset upon the armchair. Then, her black dress and skirts having fallen in a circle around her, she stood in her red silk chemise like a flower that is ready to blossom.

"As the Commander said not a word, she asked:

"'Are you asleep, my big fellow?'

"He did not answer, and she began to laugh, murmuring:

"'Wait! He is asleep. It is too funny!'

"She kept on her black silk stockings and, running to the bed, glided in quickly, seizing him full in the arms and kissing him on the lips, in order to wake him suddenly. It was the cold dead body of the traveler.

"For one second she remained immovable, too frightened to comprehend anything. But the cold of this inert flesh penetrated her own, giving her an atrocious fright before her mind had time to reflect.

"She made a bound out of the bed, trembling from head to foot; then running to the chimney-piece, she seized the candle, returned, and looked! And she perceived a frightful visage that she had never before seen, black, swollen, with eyes closed, and a horrible grimace of the jaw.

"She uttered a cry, one of those piercing interminable cries which women utter in their fright, and, letting fall the candle, she opened the door and fled, unclothed, down the passage, continuing to scream in frightful fashion. A commercial traveler, in his socks,

who occupied room number 4, came out immediately and received her in his arms.

"He asked, much startled: 'What is the matter, pretty child?'

"She stammered out, terrified: 'Some one has been killed—in—my room!'

"Other guests appeared. The landlord himself ran out.

"And suddenly the Commander showed his tall figure at the end of the corridor. When she saw him, she threw herself toward him, crying:

"'Save me, save me, Gontran— Some one has been killed in our room.'

"Explanations were difficult. Master Trouveau however, told the truth and demanded that they release Miss Clarisse, for whom he vouched with his own head. But the commercial traveler in socks, having examined the dead body, declared that a crime had been committed, and he convinced the other strangers that Miss Clarisse and her lover should not be allowed to depart.

"They were obliged to await the arrival of the police commissioner, who gave them their liberty, but was not discreet.

"The following month, President Amandon received promotion with a new place of residence."

ONE PHASE OF LOVE

THE walls of the cell were bare and whitewashed. A narrow, barred window, so high that it could not easily be reached, lighted this little room; the crazy man, seated on a straw chair, looked at us with a fixed eye, vague and haunting. He was thin, with wrinkled cheeks and almost white hair that one would think had grown white in a few months. His clothes seemed too large for his dried-up limbs, his shrunken chest, and hollow body. One felt that this man had been ravaged by his thoughts, by a thought, as fruit is by a worm. His madness, his idea, was there in his head, obstinate, harassing, devouring. It was eating his body, little by little. It, the Invisible, the Impalpable, the Unseizable, the Immaterial Idea gnawed his flesh, drank his blood, and extinguished his life.

What a mystery, that this man should be killed by a Thought! He is an object of fear and pity, this madman! What strange dream, frightful and deadly, can dwell in his forehead, to fold such profound and ever-changing wrinkles in it?

The doctor said to me: "He has terrible paroxysms of rage, and is one of the most singularly demented people I have ever seen. His madness is of an amorous, erotic kind. He is a sort of necrophile. He has written a journal which shows as plainly as daylight the malady of his mind. His madness is visible, so to speak. If you are interested, you may run through this document."

I followed the doctor into his office and he gave me the journal of this miserable man.

"Read it," said he, "and give me your opinion about it."

Here is what the little book contained:

"Up to the age of thirty-two years I lived tranquilly without love. Life appeared to me very simple, very good, and very easy. I was rich. I had a taste for some things, but had never felt a passion for anything. It was good to live! I awoke happy each day, to do things which it pleased me to do, and I went to bed satisfied with calm hope for the next day and a future without care.

"I had had some mistresses without ever having my heart torn by desire or my soul bruised by love after the possession. It is good so to live. It is better to love, but terrible. Still those who love like everybody else should find happiness, less than mine, perhaps, for love has come to me in an unbelievable manner.

"Being rich, I collected ancient furniture and antiques. Often I thought of the unknown hands which had touched these things, of the eyes that had admired them, and the hearts that had loved them—

for one does love such things! I often remained for hours and hours looking at a little watch of the last century. It was so dainty, so pretty with its enamel and gold embossing. And it still went, as on the day when some woman had bought it, delighted in the possession of so fine a jewel. It had not ceased to palpitate, to live its mechanical life, but had ever continued its regular ticktack, although a century had passed. Who then had first carried it upon her breast, in the warmth of the dress—the heart of the watch beating against the heart of the woman? What hand had held it at the ends of its warm fingers, then wiped the enameled shepherds, tarnished a little by the moisture of the skin? What eyes had looked upon this flowered dial awaiting the hour, the dear hour, the divine hour?

"How I wished to see her, to know her, the woman who had chosen this rare and exquisite object. But she is dead! I am possessed by a desire for women of former times; I love all those who have loved long ago. The story of past tenderness fills my heart with regrets. Oh! the beauty, the smiles, the caresses of youth, the hopes! These things should be eternal!

"How I have wept, during whole nights, over the women of old, so beautiful, so tender, so sweet, whose lips have opened to the kiss, and who are now dead! The kiss is immortal! It goes from lip to lip, from century to century, from age to age! Men take it and give it and die.

"The past attracts me, the present frightens me, because the future is death. I regret all that which is gone, I weep for those who have lived; I wish to

stop the hour, to arrest time. But it goes, it goes, it passes away, and it takes me, from second to second, a little of me for the annihilation of to-morrow. And I shall never live again.

"Adieu, women of yesterday, I love you.

"And yet I have nothing to complain of. I have found her whom I awaited, and I have tasted through her of inconceivable pleasure.

"I was roaming around Paris on a sunny morning, with joyous foot and happy soul, looking in the shops with the vague interest of a stroller. All at once I saw in a shop of antiquities, an Italian piece of furniture of the XVIIth century. It was very beautiful, very rare. I attributed it to a Venetian artist, named Vitelli, who belonged to that epoch. Then I passed along.

"Why did the remembrance of this piece of furniture follow me with so much force that I went back over my steps? I stopped again before the shop to look at it, and felt that it tempted me.

"What a singular thing is temptation! One looks at an object, and, little by little, it seduces you, troubles you, takes possession of you like the face of a woman. Its charm enters into you, a strange charm which comes from its form, its color, and its physiognomy. Already one loves it, wishes it, desires it. A need of possession takes you, a pleasant need at first, because timid, but increasing, becoming violent and irresistible. And the merchants seem to suspect, from the look of the eye, this secret, increasing desire. I bought that piece of furniture and had it carried to my house immediately. I placed it in my room.

"Oh! I pity those who do not know this sweet hobby of the collector with the trinket which he finally buys. He caresses it with his eye and hand as if it were flesh; he returns every moment to it, thinks of it continually, wherever he goes and whatever he may be doing. The thought of it follows him into the street, into the world, everywhere. And when he re-enters his house, before even removing his gloves or his hat, he goes to look at it with the tenderness of a lover.

"Truly, for eight days I adored that piece of furniture. I kept opening its doors and drawers; I handled it with delight and tasted all the intimate joys of possession.

"One evening, in feeling the thickness of a panel, I perceived that there might be a hiding-place there. My heart began to beat and I passed the night in searching out the secret, without being able to discover it.

"I came upon it the next day by forcing a piece of metal into a crevice in the paneling. A shelf slipped, and I saw, exposed upon a lining of black velvet, a marvelous head of hair that had belonged to some woman.

"Yes, a head of hair, an enormous twist of blond hair, almost red, which had been cut off near the skin and tied together with a golden cord.

"I stood there stupefied, trembling and disturbed! An almost insensible perfume, so old that it seemed like the soul of an odor, arose from this mysterious drawer and this most surprising relic.

"I took it gently, almost religiously, and lifted it from its resting-place. Immediately it unwound,

spreading out its golden billows upon the floor, where it fell, thick and light, supple and brilliant, like the fiery tail of a comet.

"A strange emotion seized me. To whom had this belonged? When? Under what circumstances? Why had it been shut up in this piece of furniture? What adventure, what drama was connected with this souvenir? Who had cut it off? Some lover, on a day of parting? Some husband, on a day of vengeance? Or, perhaps, some woman herself, who bore on her brow the look of despair? Was it at the hour of entering the cloister that she had thrown there this fortune of love, as a token left to the world of the living? Was it the hour of closing the tomb upon the young and beautiful dead, that he who adored her took this diadem of her head, the only thing he could preserve of her, the only living part of her body that would not perish, the only thing that he could still love and caress and kiss, in the transport of his grief?

"Was it not strange that this hair should remain there thus, when there was no longer any vestige of the body with which she was born?

"It curled about my fingers and touched my skin with a singular caress, the caress of death. I felt myself affected, as if I were going to weep.

"I kept it a long time in my hands, then it seemed to me that it had some effect upon me, as if something of the soul still remained in it. And I laid it upon the velvet again, the velvet blemished by time, then pushed in the drawer, shut the doors of the closet, and betook myself to the street to dream.

"I walked straight ahead, full of sadness, and full of trouble, of the kind of trouble that remains in the heart after the kiss of love. It seemed to me I had lived in former times, and that I had known this woman.

"And Villon's lines came to my lips, bringing with them a sob:

"'Tell me in what far-off land
The Roman beauty, Flora, lives;
Hipparchia, Thais' cousin, and
All the beauty nature gives;
Echo speak, thy voice awake
Over river, stream, and lake,
Where are beauty's smiles and tears?
And where the snows of other years?

"'Blanche, as fair as lily's chalice,
Singing sweet, with voice serene,
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
Ermengarde, Le Mayne's dear queen?
Where is Joan, the good Lorraine,
Whom th' English brought to death and fame?
Where are all, O wisest seers,
And where the snows of other years?'

"When I returned to my house I had a strange desire to see my strange treasure again. I took it up and felt it, and in touching it a long shiver ran through my body.

"For some days, however, I remained in my ordinary state, although the thought of this hair never left me. Whenever I came in, it was my first desire to look at it and handle it. I would turn the key of the secretary with the same trembling that one has in opening the door of his well-beloved, for I had in

two hands and in my heart a confused, singular, continued, sensual need of burying my fingers in this charming rivulet of dead hair.

"Then, when I had finished caressing it, when I had returned it to its resting-place, I always felt that it was there, as if it were something alive, concealed, imprisoned; I felt it and I still desired it; again I had the imperious need of touching it, of feeling it, of enervating myself to the point of weariness from contact with this cold, glistening, irritating, exciting, delicious hair.

"I lived thus a month or two, I know not how long, with this thing possessing me, haunting me. I was happy and tortured, as in the expectation of love, as one is after the avowal which precedes the embrace.

"I would shut myself up alone with it in order to feel it upon my skin, to bury my lips in it, to kiss it, and bite it. I would roll it around my face, drink it in, drown my eyes in its golden waves, and finally see the blond life beyond it.

"I loved it! Yes, I loved it. I could no longer live away from it, nor be contented an hour without seeing it. I expected—I expected—what? I know not—her!

"One night I was suddenly awakened with a feeling that I was not alone in my room. I was alone, however. But I could not go to sleep again; and, as I was tossing in the fever of insomnia, I rose and went to look at the twist of hair. It appeared to me sweeter than usual, and more animated.

"Could the dead return? The kisses with which I had warmed it failed to give me happiness, and I

carried it to my bed and lay down with it, pressing it to my lips, as one does a mistress he hopes to enjoy.

"The dead returned! She came! Yes, I saw her, touched her, possessed her as she was when alive in former times, large, blond, plump, with cool breasts, and with hips in form of a lyre. And I followed that divine, undulating line from the throat to the feet, in all the curves of the flesh with my caresses.

"Yes, I possessed her, every day and every night. She had returned, Death, Death the Beautiful, the Adorable, the Mysterious, the Unknown, and returned every night.

"My happiness was so great that I could not conceal it. I found near her a superhuman delight, and in possessing this Unseizable, Invisible Death, knew a profound, inexplicable joy. No lover ever tasted joys more ardent or more terrible.

"I knew not how to conceal my happiness. I loved this possession so much that I could not bear to leave it. I carried it with me always, everywhere. I walked with it through the city, as if it were my wife, conducting it to the theater and to restaurants as one would a mistress. But they saw it,—and guessed—they took me, and threw me into prison, like a malefactor. They took it away—oh! misery!—"

The manuscript stopped there. And suddenly, as I raised my wondering eyes to the doctor, a frightful cry, a howl of fury and exasperated desire filled the asylum.

"Listen," said the doctor, "it is necessary to douse that obscene maniac with water five times a

day. It is only Sergeant Bertrand, the man who fell in love with the dead."

I stammered, moved with astonishment, horror, and pity: "But that hair—did it really exist?"

The doctor got up, opened a closet full of vials and instruments, and threw toward me, across his office, a long thick rope of blond hair, which flew toward me like a bird of gold.

I trembled at feeling upon my hands its caressing, light touch. And I stood there, my heart beating with disgust and desire, the disgust we have in coming in contact with objects connected with crimes, and the desire like that which comes with the temptation to test some infamous and mysterious thing.

Shrugging his shoulders, the doctor added: "The mind of man is capable of anything."

ONE WAY

I WAS walking along the Boulevard with Roger when some sort of vender called out:

"Here is a way of getting rid of your mother-in-law! Here!"

I stopped short and said to my comrade:

"That is a cry that reminds me of a question that I have wished to ask you for a long time. What is 'Roger's way,' of which your wife often speaks? She jokes about it in such a queer, sly fashion that it acts on me like a potion of cantharides, of which you have the secret. Every time that one mentions before her a young man who is lifeless, worn out, fatigued, she turns to you laughing and says:

"'Some one ought to show him Roger's way?' And what seems more odd still is that you always blush."

Roger responded: "There is something in it, and if my wife doubted the truth of what she speaks,

she would keep silent, I assure you. I am going to confide this little story to you. You know that I married a widow with whom I was very much in love. My wife was always rather free of speech and, before making our companionship legitimate, we often had conversations that were a little spicy, as is allowable with widows who have preserved the taste of spice in their mouths. She much liked these gay little stories and racy anecdotes, all honorable, of course. The offense of language is not grave in certain cases. She is courageous, but I am a little timid, and she often amused herself before our marriage, embarrassing me by questions or jokes to which it was not easy to respond. In fact, it was, perhaps, this courage that made me so in love with her. As for being in love, I was in love from head to foot, body and soul, and she knew it, the rogue.

"It was decided that we should have no ceremonious wedding, and take no tour. After the benediction at the church, we would give a collation to our witnesses, then we would take a drive together in a *coupé*, and return and dine at my house in Helder street.

"So, our witnesses having departed, we got into a carriage and I told the driver to take us to the Bois de Boulogne. It was the end of June, and marvelous weather.

"As soon as we were alone, she began to laugh.

"'My dear Roger,' said she, 'it is the time to be gallant. Let us see how you will manage it.'

"Summoned after this fashion, I found myself paralyzed. I kissed her hand and repeated: 'I love you.' I even took courage to kiss her neck twice,

but the passers-by constrained me. She kept repeating, in a queer, provoking way: 'And now—and now—' This 'and now' unnerved me and made me desolate. It was not possible in a *coupé*, in the Bois de Boulogne in full daylight—you understand.

"She saw my constraint and was amused at it. From time to time she repeated: 'I fear I am going to be taken ill, you inspire me with so much disquiet.' And I, too, I began to feel disturbed by my own fault. When one intimidates me I am capable of nothing.

"At dinner she was charming. And, growing more bold, I sent away my domestic who embarrassed me. Oh! now we were very agreeable, but you know how like beasts lovers are; we drank from the same glass, ate from the same plate, with the same fork, and even amused ourselves nibbling wafers from either end until our lips met in the middle.

"She said to me: 'I would like a little champagne.'

"I had forgotten the bottle upon the sideboard. I took it, cut the cords, and pressed the cork to make it come out. It would not start. Gabrielle began to laugh and murmured:

"'A bad omen.'

"I pushed with my thumb the head distended by the cord, I inclined it to the right and to the left, but in vain, and suddenly, I broke the cork against the edge of the glass.

"Gabrielle sighed: 'My poor Roger!'

"I took a corkscrew and screwed it into the remaining part. It was impossible for me to start it. I had to call Prosper.

"My wife now laughed with all her heart, and kept saying:

"'Ah well!—ah! well—I see I can count upon you.'

"She was half tipsy. She was three quarters so after the coffee.

"The putting to bed of a widow does not exact all the maternal ceremonies necessary to a young girl. Gabrielle passed tranquilly into her room, saying to me:

"'Smoke your cigar for a quarter of an hour.'

"When I rejoined her I was lacking in confidence in myself, I admit. I felt myself unnerved, troubled, and ill at ease.

"I took my place as husband. She said nothing. She looked at me with a smile upon her lips, with the visible desire to mock me. This irony, at such a moment, was enough to disconcert me, I admit it, to strike me down—arms and legs.

"When Gabrielle perceived my—embarrassment, she did nothing to reassure me, quite to the contrary. She asked me, with an indifferent air:

"'Do you always have so much spirit?'

"I could not help responding: 'Still! You are insupportable.'

"Then she began to laugh, to laugh in an immoderate fashion, a laugh disagreeable and exasperating. It is true that I was making a sad face, and that I must have had a very silly appearance.

"From time to time, between two convulsions of gaiety, she would say, half suffocating: 'Come—have courage—a little energy—my poor friend.'

"Then she would begin to laugh so desperately that she fairly cried.

"Finally, I felt myself so unnerved, so furious against myself and against her that I felt that I should strike her if I did not leave the room.

"I jumped from the bed, dressed myself brusquely, with rage and without saying a word.

"She was suddenly calmed and, understanding that I was angry, she asked: 'What are you going to do? Where are you going?'

"I did not answer. I descended to the street. I had a desire to kill some one, to avenge myself, and do some folly. I walked straight on at a great pace, and suddenly the thought of entering a public house came into my mind.

"Who knows? It would be an experiment, an experience, and perhaps, a diversion. In any case, it would be revenge! And if I should ever be deceived by my wife, she would always have this against me first.

"I did not hesitate. I knew of a lovers' hostelry not far from my residence, and hurried there, entering as people throw themselves into the water, sometimes, to see if they can swim.

"I could swim, and very well. And I stayed a long time, relishing this secret, sharp vengeance. I found myself in the street again at that cool hour when night is gone. I now felt calm and sure of myself, content and tranquil, and still ready, it seemed to me, for prowess.

"I returned to my house with deliberation; I opened the door of my chamber. Gabrielle was reading, propped up on her pillow. She raised her head and said in a frightened tone: 'Are you there? Where have you been?'

"I did not answer. I undressed myself with assurance. And I returned as master triumphant to the place I had left as a fugitive.

"She was stupefied, and convinced that I had employed some mysterious secret.

"And now, whenever it is apropos, she speaks of Roger's way as she would speak of some scientific, infallible process. But alas! ten years have passed since that, and the same experiment would not have so much chance of success, in my case at least.

"But if you have some friend who fears his emotions on his wedding night, indicate to him my stratagem, and assure him that, between twenty and thirty-five years of age, there is no better method of discovering some points, as Sieur Brantôme has already said."

FLY

RECOLLECTIONS OF A BOATMAN

HE SAID to us: "I saw some very funny things and some funny girls when I was a boatman, and I have often been tempted to write a little book to be called 'On the Seine,' telling all about that careless and vigorous, that merry and poor life, a life of robust and noisy enjoyment, which I led from the time I was twenty until I was thirty.

"I was then a mere understrapper without a half-penny; now I am a man who has made his money, who has spent large sums on a momentary caprice. In my heart, I had a thousand modest and unrealizable desires which gilded my existence with imaginary hopes, though now, I really do not know that any fancy would make me get out of my armchair where I am dozing. How simple and nice and good it is to live like this, between my office in Paris and the river at Argenteuil. For ten years, the

Seine was my only, my absorbing passion. Ah! that beautiful, calm, diversified, and stinking river, full of mirage and filth. I think I loved it so much, because it seemed to give me a sense of life. Oh! what walks I had along the grassy banks, where my friends the frogs were dreaming on the leaf of a nenuphar, and where the coquettish and delicate water lilies suddenly opened to me, behind a willow, a leaf out of a Japanese album, and where the kingfisher flashed past me like a blue flame! How I loved it all, with the instinctive love of eyes which seemed to be all over my body, and with a natural and profound joy.

"Just as other men keep the recollection of sweet and tender nights, so I remember sunrises in the morning mist, floating, wandering vapors, which were as pale as death, before the sun rose and then as its first rays glided over the meadows, lighted up with a rosy tint which delighted the heart. And then again, I have recollections of the moon silvering the running, trembling water with a brightness which made dreams flourish. And all this, the symbol of eternal illusions, rose up in me on that turbid water which was carrying all the filth of Paris toward the sea.

"And then what a merry life it was with my companions. There were five of us, a band of grave men we are now; and as we were all poor, we had founded an inexpressible colony in a horrible eating-house at Argenteuil, which possessed only one bedroom, where I have certainly spent some of the maddest nights of my life. We cared for nothing except for amusing ourselves and rowing, for we all worshiped the oar, with one exception. I remember such singular adventures, such unlikely tricks invented

by those five rascals, that no one would believe them at present. People do not live like that any longer, even on the Seine, for our mad fancies have died out now.

"We possessed only one boat, which we had bought with great difficulty, and on which we laughed, as we shall never laugh again. It was a large yawl, called, 'The Leaf Turned Upside Down,' rather heavy, but spacious and comfortable. I shall not describe all my companions to you. There was one little fellow, called Petit Bleu, who was very sharp; a tall man, with a savage look, gray eyes and black hair, who was nicknamed 'Tomahawk,' the only one who never touched an oar, as he said he should upset the boat; a slender, elegant man, who was very careful about his person, and whom we called 'Only-One-Eye,' in remembrance of a recent story about Cladel and because he wore a single eyeglass, and, lastly, I, who had been baptized Joseph Prunier. We lived together in perfect harmony, and our only regret was that we had no boatwoman, for a woman's presence is almost indispensable on a boat. It keeps the men's wits and hearts on the alert, it animates them, and wakes them up, and a woman looks well walking on the green banks with a red parasol. But we did not want an ordinary boatwoman for us five, for we were not very like the rest of the world. We wanted something unexpected, funny, ready for everything, something, in short, which it would be almost impossible to find. We had tried many without success, girls who had held the tiller, imbecile boatwomen who always preferred the wine that intoxicates to the water which flows and carries the yawls. We

kept them for one Sunday, and then got rid of them in disgust.

"Well, one Saturday afternoon, Only-One-Eye brought us a little thin, lively, jumping, chattering girl, full of drollery, of that drollery which is the substitute for wit among the youthful male and female workpeople who have developed in the streets of Paris. She was nice-looking without being pretty, the outline of a woman who had some of everything, one of those silhouettes which draftsmen draw in three strokes on the table in a *café* after dinner, between a glass of brandy and a cigarette. Nature is like that, sometimes.

"The first evening she surprised us, amused us, and we could not form any opinion about her, so unexpectedly had she come among us; but having fallen into this nest of men, who were all ready for any folly, she was soon mistress of the situation, and the very next day she had made a conquest of each one of us. She was quite cracked, into the bargain, and must have been born with a glass of absinthe in her stomach, which her mother drank at the moment she was being delivered. She had never been sober since, for her wet nurse, so she said, recruited her strength with draughts of rum, and she never called the bottles which stand in a line at the back of the wine merchant's shop by any other name but 'My holy family.'

"I do not know which of us gave her the name of 'Fly,' nor why it was given her. But it suited her very well, and stuck to her; and our yawl every week carried five merry, strong young fellows on the Seine between Asnières and Maison Lafitte, who were

ruled from under a parasol of colored paper by a lively and madcap young person, who treated them like slaves whose business it was to row her about, and of whom they were all very fond.

"We were all very fond of her, for a thousand reasons first of all, but for only one, afterward. In the stern of our boat, she was a kind of small word-mill, chattering to the wind which blew on the water. She chattered ceaselessly, with the slight, continuous noise of those pieces of winged mechanism which turn in the breeze and she thoughtlessly said the most unexpected, the funniest, the most astonishing things. In that mind, all the parts of which seemed dissimilar, like rags of all kinds and of every color, not sewn, but merely tacked together, there appeared to be as much imagination as in a fairy tale, a good deal of coarseness, indecency, impudence, and of the unexpected, and as much breeziness and landscapes as in a balloon voyage.

"We put questions to her, in order to call forth answers which she had found, no one could tell where, and the one with which we teased her most frequently was: 'Why are you called Fly?' And she gave us such unlikely reasons that we left off rowing, in order to laugh. But she pleased us also as a woman; and Tomahawk who never rowed, and who sat by her side at the tiller the whole day long, once replied to the usual question: 'Why are you called Fly?' 'Because she is a little Spanish fly.'

"Yes, a little, buzzing, exciting fly, not the classical, poisonous, brilliant, and mantled Spanish fly, but a little Spanish fly with red wings which began to disturb the whole crew of 'The Leaf Turned Upside

Down.' And what stupid jokes were also made about this leaf where this fly had alighted!

"Since the arrival of Fly on our boat, Only-One-Eye had taken a leading, superior part among us, the part of a gentleman who has a wife, toward four others who have not got one, and he abused that privilege so far as to kiss Fly in our presence, when he put her on his knee after meals, and by other prerogatives, which were as humiliating as they were irritating.

"They had been isolated in the sleeping-room by means of a curtain, but I soon perceived that my companions and I had the same arguments in our minds, in our solitude: 'Why, and in virtue of what law of exception, or of what unacceptable principle, should Fly, who does not appear troubled by any prejudices, remain faithful to her lover, while ladies of society are not faithful to their husbands.

"Our reflections were quite right, and we were soon convinced of it, and we ought only to have made them sooner, so as not to have needed to regret any lost time, for Fly deceived Only-One-Eye, with all the others of the crew of 'The Leaf Turned Upside Down,' and she deceived him without making any difficulties, without any resistance, the first time any of us asked her.

"Of course, modest people will be terribly shocked! But why? What courtesan who happens to be in the fashion but has a dozen lovers, and which of those lovers is stupid enough not to know it? Is it not the correct thing to have an evening at the house of a celebrated and marked courtesan, just as one has an evening at the *Opéra*, the *Théâtre Français*, or the

Odéon? Ten men subscribe together to keep a mistress just as they do to possess a race horse which only one jockey mounts, who is a correct picture of the favored lover.

"From delicacy they left Fly to Only-One-Eye, from Saturday night to Monday morning, and we only deceived him during the week, in Paris, from the Seine, which, for boatmen like us, was hardly deceiving him at all. The situation had this peculiarity, that the four freebooters of Fly's favors were quite aware of this partition of her among themselves, and that they spoke of it to each other, and even then, with allusions that made her laugh very much. Only-One-Eye alone seemed to know nothing, and that peculiar position gave rise to some embarrassment between him and us, and seemed to separate him from us, to isolate him, to raise a barrier across our former confidence and our former intimacy. That gave him a difficult and a rather ridiculous part to play toward us, the part of a deceived lover, almost a husband's part.

"As he was very clever and gifted with the special faculty of not showing what he felt, we sometimes asked each other, whether he did not guess anything, and he took care to let us know, in a manner that was painful for us. We were going to breakfast at Bougival, and we were rowing vigorously, when Tomahawk, who had, that morning, the triumphant look of a man who was satisfied, and who, sitting by the steerswoman, seemed to squeeze himself rather too close to her, in our estimation, stopped the rowing by calling out: 'Stop!'

"The four oars were drawn out of the water, and then, turning to his neighbor, he said to her: 'Why

were you called Fly?' But before she could reply the voice of Only-One-Eye, who was sitting in the bow, said, dryly: 'Because she settles on all the carrion.'

"There was a dead silence, and an embarrassed pause, which was followed by an inclination to laugh, while Fly herself looked very much confused. Tomahawk gave the order: 'Row on, all'; and the boat started again. The incident was closed, and light let in upon the subject, and that little adventure made no difference in our habits, but it only re-established cordiality between Only-One-Eye and us. He once more became the honored proprietor of the Fly from Saturday night until Monday morning, as his superiority over all of us had been thoroughly established by that definition, which, moreover, closed one of the questions about the word Fly. For the future we were satisfied with playing the secondary part of grateful and polite friends who profited discreetly on the week days, without any contention of any kind among ourselves.

"That answered very well for about three months, but then suddenly Fly assumed a strange attitude toward us. She was less merry, nervous, uneasy, and almost irritable, and we frequently asked her: 'What is the matter with you?' And she replied: 'Nothing; leave me alone.'

"Only-One-Eye told us what was the matter with her, one Saturday evening. We had just sat down to table in the little dining-room which our eating-house keeper Barbichon reserved for us at his inn, and, the soup being finished, we were waiting for the fried fish, when our friend, who also appeared thoughtful,

took Fly's hand and said: 'My dear comrades, I have a very grave communication to make to you, and one that may, perhaps, give rise to a prolonged discussion, but we shall have to argue between the courses. Poor Fly has announced a piece of disastrous news to me, and at the same time has asked me to tell it to you: She is *enceinte*, and I will only add these words. This is not the moment to abandon her, and it is forbidden to try and find out who is the father.'*

"At first we were stupefied, and felt as if some disaster had befallen us, and we looked at each other with the longing to accuse some one, but whom? Oh! Which of us? I have never felt as I did at that moment, the perfidy of that cruel joke of nature, which never allows a man to know for certainty whether he is the father of his child. Then, however, by degrees a sort of feeling of consolation came over us and gave us comfort, which sprung from a confused idea of joint responsibility.

"Tomahawk, who spoke but little, formulated a beginning of reassurance by these words: 'Well, so much the worse, by Jove: *Union is Strength*, however.' At that moment a scullion brought in the fried gudgeons, but we did not fall to on them like we generally did, for we all had the same trouble on our mind, and Only-One-Eye continued: 'Under these circumstances, she has had the delicacy to confess everything to me. My friends, we are all equally guilty, so let us shake hands and adopt the child.'

* "*La recherche de la paternité est interdite.*" A celebrated clause in the "Code Napoléon," whereby a man cannot be made chargeable for a bastard.

"That was decided upon unanimously; we raised our hands to the dish of fried fish and swore: 'We will adopt it.' Then, when she was thus suddenly saved, and delivered from the weight of the terrible anxiety that had been tormenting her for a month, this pretty, crazy, poor child of love, Fly, exclaimed: 'Oh! my friends! my friends! You have kind, good, hearts—good hearts. Thank you, all of you!' And she shed tears for the first time, before us all.

"From that time we spoke in the boat about the child, as if it were already born, and each of us took an exaggerated interest, because of our possible share in the matter, and we would stop rowing in order to say: 'Fly?'

"'Here I am,' she replied.

"'Boy or girl?'

"'Boy.'

"'What will he be, when he grows up?'

"Then she indulged in the most fantastic flights of fancy. There were interminable stories, astounding inventions, from the day of his birth until his final triumph. In the unsophisticated, passionate, and moving fancy of this extraordinary little creature, who now lived chastely in the midst of us five, whom she called 'her five papas,' she saw him as a sailor, and told us that he would discover another America; as a general, restoring Alsace and Lorraine to France; then as an emperor, founding a dynasty of wise and generous rulers who would bestow settled welfare on our country; then as a learned man and natural philosopher, revealing, first of all, the secret of the manufacture of gold, then that of living forever; then as an aëronaut, who invented the means of soaring up

to the stars, and of making the skies an immense promenade for men; the realization of the most unforeseen and magnificent dreams.

"How nice and how amusing she was, poor little girl, until the end of the summer, but the twentieth of September dissipated her dream. We had come back from breakfasting at the Maison Lafitte and were passing Saint-Germain, when she felt thirsty and asked us to stop at Pecq.

"For some time past, she had been getting very heavy, and that inconvenienced her very much. She could not run about as she used to do, nor jump from the boat to the shore, as she had formerly done. She would try, in spite of our warnings and efforts to stop her, and she would have fallen a dozen times, had it not been that our restraining arms kept her back. On that day, she was imprudent enough to wish to land before the boat had stopped; it was one of those pieces of bravado by which athletes who are ill or tired sometimes kill themselves, and at the very moment when we were going to come alongside, she got up, took a spring and tried to jump on to the landing-stage. She was not strong enough, however, and only just touched the stones with her foot, struck the sharp angle with her stomach, uttered a cry and disappeared into the water.

"We all five plunged in at the same moment, and pulled out the poor, fainting woman, who was as pale as death, and was already suffering terrible pain, and we carried her as quickly as possible to the nearest inn, and sent for a medical man. For the six hours that her trouble lasted, she suffered the most terrible pain with the courage of a heroine, while we

were grieving round her, feverish with anxiety and fear. Then she was delivered of a dead child, and for some days, we were in the greatest fear for her life; at last, however, the doctor said to us one morning: 'I think her life is saved. That girl is made of steel,' and we all of us went into her room, with radiant hearts, and Only-One-Eye, as spokesman for us all, said to her: 'The danger is all over, little Fly, and we are all happy again.'

"Then, for the second time she wept in our presence, and, with her eyes full of tears, she said, hesitatingly:

"'Oh! If you only knew, if you only knew what a grief it is—what a grief it is to me. I shall never get over it.'

"'Over what, little Fly?'

"'Over having killed it, for I did kill it! Without intending to! Oh! how grieved I am!'

"She was sobbing, and we stood round, deeply touched, but without knowing what to say, and she went on: 'Have you seen it?'

"And we replied with one voice: 'Yes.'

"'It was a boy, was it not?'

"'Yes.'

"'Beautiful, was it not?'

"We hesitated a good deal, but Petit-Bleu, who was less scrupulous than the rest of us, made up his mind to affirm it, and said: 'Very beautiful.'

"He committed a mistake, however, for she began to sob, and almost to scream with grief and Only-One-Eye, who perhaps loved her more than the rest of us did, had a happy thought. Kissing her eyes, that were dimmed with tears, he said: 'Console

yourself, little Fly, console yourself, we will redeem ourselves.'

"Her innate sense of the ridiculous was suddenly excited, and half-convinced, and half-joking, still tearful and her heart sore with grief, she said, looking at us all:

"'Do you really mean it?' And we replied all at once:

"'We really mean it.'"

GOOD REASONS

SOLLES VILLA, July 30, 1883.

MY DEAR LUCY:

There is nothing new. We still live in the parlor, looking out to see the rain fall. One can scarcely go out at all in this frightful weather. We can only play comedies. And how stupid they are, my dear, these pieces in a drawing-room repertory. So forced, so heavy, and gross! The jokes are like bullets from a cannon, always hitting some one. Nothing bright, nothing natural, good natured, or elegant. These writers, truly, can know nothing of the world. They are entirely ignorant of how people think or speak among us. I could easily forgive them for scorning our customs or our manners, but I cannot forgive them for being ignorant of them. In order to be pointed, they make a play upon words that a barracks would do well to deride; in order to be gay, they serve us the wit they have culled outside the Boulevard, in the beer-shops of so-called artists, where the same studied paradoxes have been repeated for fifty years.

Yes, we play a comedy. As there are only two women, my husband takes the part of a soubrette, shaving his face for it. You cannot imagine, my dear Lucy, how it changed him! I should not have known him—either by day or night. If he had not allowed his mustache to grow again immediately I believe that I should have become unfaithful, so much did I dislike it.

Truly, a man without a mustache is not a man. I do not care much for a beard; it always gives an appearance of neglect; but the mustache, oh! the mustache is indispensable to a manly physiognomy. No, one never could imagine how useful this little brush of hair upon the lip is to the eye and—to the relation of married people. There have come to me many reflections upon this subject, which I scarcely dare write to you. I could say them to you easily—in a low voice. But it is difficult to find words to express certain things, and some of these, which it would be hard to replace, cut a villainous figure upon paper, so that I can scarcely pen them. Then, the subject is so delicate, so difficult, so awkward, that an infinite knowledge is necessary to approach it without danger.

Well! so much the worse if you do not understand. And now, my dear, try to read a little between the lines.

When my husband came to me shaved, I understood for the first time that I could never have a weakness for a strolling player, nor for a preacher, were he Father Didon himself, the most seductive of all! Then, when I found myself alone with him (my husband), it was much worse.

Oh! my dear Lucy, never allow yourself to be embraced by a man without mustaches; his lips have no taste, none whatever! There is no longer that charm, that softness, and that — pepper, yes, that pepper of the true kiss. The mustache is the spice of it.

Imagine a piece of dry, or even humid parchment applied to your lips. That is the caress of the shaven man. One wants very few of them, assuredly.

But whence comes the seduction of the mustache, you ask me? How do I know? At first it tickles in delicious fashion. One feels it before the mouth and it makes a charming shiver pass through the whole body, even to the tips of the toes. It is that which caresses, which makes the flesh tremble and start, which gives the nerves that exquisite vibration and causes the utterance of that little "ah!" as if one had received a sudden chill.

And upon the neck! Yes, have you never felt a mustache upon your neck? It intoxicates and makes you shiver, runs down your back and to the ends of your fingers. You turn, shake your shoulders, twist your head; you wish to go and to stay; it is adorable yet irritating! But it is good!

And then again — truly, do I dare say more? A husband who loves you, yes, entirely, knows how to find spots and little corners for concealing kisses, little corners one would scarcely dream of alone. Well, without a mustache these kisses lose much of their zest, without saying that they are unbecoming! Explain that as you will! For my part, here is the reason I find for it. A lip without mustaches is bare, like a body without clothes; and it is necessary to have clothes, very few if you wish, but still some!

The Creator (I dare not use any other word in speaking of these things), the Creator saw the need of veiling the nooks of our flesh where love is concealed. A shaven mouth appears to me to resemble a forest, cut down, which sheltered a fountain where one came to drink and sleep.

This recalls to me the saying of a political man, which has been in my head for three months now. My husband, who reads the newspapers, read a very singular thing to me one evening, by our Minister of Agriculture, who was then called M. Meline. Is there another one by this time? I am sure I do not know.

I was not listening, but this name, Meline, struck me. It recalled, I know not why, "Scenes of Bohemian Life." I believed at once that he lived with a *grisette*. Only certain scraps of this piece entered my head. But M. Meline made to the inhabitants of Amiens, I believe, this statement, the meaning of which I have sought until now: "There is no patriotism without agriculture!" Well, this means, I have found out recently, and now declare to you in my turn, that there is no love without a mustache. If one should tell him that, it would seem strange, would it not?

There is no love without a mustache!

"There is no patriotism without agriculture," asserts M. Meline; he is right, this minister, I know it now!

From another point of view the mustache is essential. It determines the physiognomy. It gives it a sweet, tender, violent, foolish, rakish, or enterprising air! The bearded man, really bearded, he who

carries all his hair (oh! villainous word) upon his cheeks never has any delicacy of expression, because his features are concealed. And the form of the jaw and the chin show many things to him who can see.

In a mustache, a man preserves at the same time his attraction and his finesse.

And of what varied appearance they are, these mustaches! Some are curved, curled, and coquettish. These seem to love women above all things!

Some are pointed, sharp as a needle, wicked. These have a preference for wine, horses, and fights.

Some are enormous, drooping, frightful. These great ones generally conceal an excellent character, a goodness that approaches weakness and a gentleness that borders on timidity.

And then, above all else, why I adore a mustache is because it is French. It has descended to us from our fathers, the Gauls, and has continued as a sign of our national character.

It is romantic, gallant, and brave. It dips itself daintily in wine and knows how to laugh with elegance, while large bearded jaws are heavy in all that they do.

Wait! I recall something which made me weep bitter tears, and which also made me love a mustache upon a man's lip, as I now plainly see.

It was during the war, when I was at home in papa's house. I was a young girl then. One day there was a battle near the house. Since morning I had heard cannons and guns and, in the evening, a German colonel entered our house and installed himself there. He went away the next day. They came to tell my father that there had been many deaths on

the field. He went to find them and bring them home, in order to bury them together. They laid them all along the avenue of pines, on both sides, from the stretcher on which they brought them. And, as they commenced to smell badly, they threw some earth on the bodies to await the digging of the great ditch. In this way only their heads were to be seen, which seemed to come up out of the soil, yellow as the soil itself, with their eyes closed.

I wished to see them; but when I perceived these two lines of frightful faces, I thought it would make me ill. I began to examine them, however, one by one, seeking to find out to what nation they belonged. Their uniforms were buried, concealed by the earth, but immediately, yes, immediately, my dear, I recognized them as Frenchmen by their mustaches!

Some had been shaved the day of the battle, as if wishing to be attractive to the last moment! Their beard, nevertheless, had grown a little, for you know it grows a little even after death. Others seemed to have gone a week without shaving; but all wore the French mustache, distinctly, the proud mustache which seemed to say: "Do not confound me with my bearded friend, little one, I am your brother."

And I wept, oh! I wept more than if I had not thus recognized them, the poor dead men!

I did wrong to tell you this story. Here I am now, sad and incapable of chatting any more. Adieu, then, my dear Lucy; I embrace you with all my heart. Long live the mustache!

JEANNE.

Submitted to GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

A FAIR EXCHANGE

M. BONTRAM, the celebrated Parisian advocate who for the last ten years had obtained many separations between badly matched husbands and wives, opened the door of his office and stood back to allow a new client to enter.

He was a large, red man, with close, blond whiskers, a corpulent man, full-blooded and vigorous. He bowed.

"Take a seat," said the advocate.

The client was seated and, after some hemming, said:

"I came to ask you, sir, to plead a divorce case for me."

"Speak, sir," said the advocate, "I am listening."

"I am, sir, an old notary."

"Already!"

"Yes, already. I am thirty-seven years of age."

"Continue."

"Sir, I have made an unfortunate marriage, very unfortunate."

"You are not the only one."

"I know it, and I pity the others. But my case is entirely different, and my complaint against my wife is of a very particular nature. I will commence at the marriage rite. I was married in strange fashion. Do you believe in dangerous ideas?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Do you believe that certain ideas are as dangerous for the mind as poison is to the body?"

"Well, yes, perhaps."

"It is certain. There are ideas which enter into us, corrode us, and kill us or render us mad, if we do not know how to resist them. They are a sort of poison to the soul. If we have the misfortune to allow one of these thoughts to glide in upon us, if we do not perceive at the beginning that it is an invader, a mistress, a tyrant, then it will extend itself hour by hour and day by day, will keep returning and finally install itself, driving out all ordinary occupation of our minds, absorbing our attention, changing our views and our judgment until we are lost.

"That is what happened to me sir. As I have told you, I am a notary at Rouen, not poor but in straitened circumstances, full of care, forced to a constant economy, obliged to limit my tastes, yes, in everything! And it is hard, at my age.

"As a notary, I read, with great care, the advertisements on four pages of the newspapers, the wants, offers, little correspondence, etc., etc., and I had been enabled sometimes by this means to make advantageous marriages for my clients.

One day, I fell upon this:

"'A pretty girl, fashionable, well brought up, would marry honorable gentleman and bring him two million five hundred thousand francs, clear. No agencies.'

"On that very day I dined with two friends, one an attorney and the other the proprietor of a spinning mill. I don't know how the conversation turned to marriages, but I told them, laughing, about the pretty young lady with the two million five hundred thousand francs.

"The spinner said: 'What can these women be thinking of?'

"The attorney affirmed that he had several times seen excellent marriages made under these conditions, and gave some details. Then he added, turning to me: 'Why the devil don't you look this up for yourself? Jove! that would drive away care, two million five hundred thousand francs.'

"We all three laughed over it and then spoke of other things. An hour later I returned home.

"It grew cold that night. Besides, I lived in an old house, one of those old houses of the provinces which resemble mushroom-beds. In taking hold of the iron balustrade of the staircase, a coldness penetrated my arm, and as I put out the other to find the wall, in coming in contact with it, a second shiver enveloped me, joining with the other in my lungs, filling me with pain, with sadness, and weakness. And, seized by a sudden remembrance, I murmured: 'Gad! if I only had the two million five hundred thousand!'

"My room was dreary, the room of a bachelor in Rouen, which is taken care of by a maid who is also in charge of the kitchen. You know that kind of room! A great bed without curtains, a wardrobe, a commode, and a dressing table; no fire. Some coats were on the chairs, papers on the floor. I began to sing, to the air of a concert-hall tune that I frequently heard about that time:

"'Two millions, two millions
Are fine,
With five hundred thousand
And woman divine.'

"In fact I had not yet thought about the woman, but I thought of her then as I was sliding into my bed. I even thought of her so much that I was a long time getting to sleep.

"The next day, on opening my eyes, I remembered that I ought to be at Darnetal at eight o'clock on important business. To do this I must be up at six—and it was cold! Only think of two million five hundred thousand!

"I returned to my study about ten o'clock. In it was the odor of the red-hot stove, of old papers, with the papers of advance proceedings,—nothing can equal these,—and an odor of clerks—boots, overcoats, hair, and skin, skin in winter, too little bathed, and all heated to seventy degrees.

"I breakfasted, as I do every day, on a cutlet and a piece of cheese. Then I put myself to work. For the first time, I then began to think seriously of the pretty young lady with the two million five hundred

thousand. Who was she? Why not write to her? Why not find out?

"Finally, sir, to abridge, for two weeks this idea haunted me, possessed me, and tortured me. All my little cares and troubles, of which I had plenty but had thought little about before this time, began to sting me now like the sharp points of needles, and each of my sufferings made me think still more of the pretty young lady with the two millions.

"I ended by imagining all her history. When one desires a thing, sir, he is very apt to figure it as he hopes it to be. Certainly it was not natural that a young girl of good family, dowered in such a generous fashion, should be seeking a husband by means of the newspapers. Yet, it might be that this girl was honorable but unhappy.

"Then, at first this fortune of two million five hundred thousand had not struck me as anything fairylike. We are accustomed, we who read the offers of this nature, to propositions of marriage accompanied by six, eight, ten, or even twelve millions. The figure of twelve millions is common enough. It pleases. I know well that we can scarcely believe the validity of these promises. They, however, make us enter into the spirit of fantastic numbers, render probable, up to a certain point in our listless credulity, the prodigious sums which they represent and dispose us to consider a dowry of two million five hundred thousand as very possible and right.

"Then a young girl, the natural child of a rich man and a chambermaid, having suddenly inherited from her father, could have learned at the same time

of the stain upon her birth, and in order not to have to reveal it to some man whom she might have loved, she might make an appeal to the unknown by this means, which carries in itself a sort of avowal of defect.

"My supposition was stupid. I believed in it, nevertheless. We notaries ought never to read romances, but I read one in this, sir.

"Then I wrote, as a notary, in the name of a client, and I waited. Five days later, toward three o'clock in the afternoon, when I was hard at work in my office, the chief clerk announced:

"'Mlle. Chantefrise.'

"'Let her come in.'

"There appeared a woman about thirty, a little stout, dark, and somewhat embarrassed.

"'Be seated, Mademoiselle.'

"She sat down, and murmured: 'It is I, sir.'

"'But I have not the honor of knowing you.'

"'The person to whom you wrote.'

"'About a marriage?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'Ah! very well!'

"'I have come myself because I thought it better to attend to those things in person.'

"'I am of your opinion, Mademoiselle. And so you desire to marry?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'You have some family?'

"She hesitated, lowered her eyes, and stammered: 'No, sir. My mother and my father—are dead.'

"I started. Then I had guessed right—and a lively sympathy was suddenly awakened in my heart for this

poor creature. I could not altogether spare her delicacy of feeling and I inquired:

"'Your fortune is in your own right?'

"She responded this time without hesitating: 'Oh! yes, sir.'

"I looked at her with close attention and truly she did not displease me, only a little hard, harder than I would have liked. She was a beautiful person, a strong person, a masterly woman. And the idea came to me of playing with her a little comedy of sentiment, of becoming her lover, of supplanting my imaginary client, when I was once assured that the dowry was not illusory. I spoke to her of this client whom I depicted as a sad man, very honorable, but a little of an invalid.

"She said vivaciously: 'Oh! sir, I love people to be well.'

"'But you will see him—only not for three or four days, because he left for England yesterday.'

"'Oh! how annoying,' she replied.

"'Well, yes and no. Are you in a hurry to return home?'

"'Not at all.'

"'Then stay here, and I will attempt to make the time pass pleasantly for you.'

"'You are very amiable, sir.'

"'You are at some hotel?'

"She named the best hotel in Rouen.

"'Well, then, Mademoiselle Chantefrise, will you permit your future—notary to offer to take you to dinner this evening?'

"She appeared to hesitate, seemed disturbed, and undecided. Then she said: 'Yes, sir.'

"'I will be at your hotel at seven o'clock.'
"'Yes, sir.'
"'Then until this evening, Mademoiselle?'
"'Yes, sir.'
"And I conducted her as far as my door.

"At seven o'clock I was at her hotel. She had made a fresh toilette for me and received me in a very coquettish fashion. I took her to dine in a restaurant where I was known and ordered a troublesome *menu*. An hour later we were very friendly and she had told me her story.

"She was the daughter of a great lady seduced by a gentleman, and she had been brought up among peasants. She was rich now, having inherited large sums from her father and from her mother, whose name she would never divulge, never. It was useless to ask it of her, useless to beg, she would never tell it. As I cared little to know these things, I asked about her fortune. She spoke about it like a practical woman, sure of herself, sure of her figures, of her titles, of her income, her interest, and investments. Her understanding of these matters gave me great confidence in her, and I became gallant, with some reserve, nevertheless. But I showed her clearly that I had a liking for her.

"She affected an excessive refinement, not without grace. I offered her some champagne, and I drank some, which blurred my ideas. I then felt clearly that I was going to be entrapped, and I was afraid, afraid of myself and afraid of her, afraid that she was not moved and that she would not succumb. In order to calm myself, I began again to speak to her

of her fortune, saying that it would be necessary to precisely understand matters, since my client was a man of affairs.

"She answered with gaiety: 'Oh! I know. I have brought all the proofs.'

"'Here, to Rouen?'

"'Yes, to Rouen.'

"'You have them at the hotel?'

"'Yes, I have them all there.'

"'Could you show them to me?'

"'Yes, indeed.'

"'This evening?'

"'Yes, indeed.'

"That pleased me in every way. I paid the score and we went back to the hotel. She had, in fact, brought all her certificates. I could not doubt them, for I held them in my hands, felt them, and read them. They put such a joy in my heart that I suddenly felt a violent desire to embrace her. I understood this as a chaste desire, the desire of a contented man. And I did embrace her, in fact, once, twice, ten times—so much that—with the aid of the champagne—I succumbed—or rather—no—she succumbed.

"Ah! sir, I had a head after that, and she! She wept like a fountain, begging me not to expose her or she should be lost. I promised all that she wished, and I myself got into a terrible state of mind.

"What was to be done? I had abused my client's confidence. That would not have been so bad if I had had a client for her, but I had none. I was the client, the simple client, the deceived client, and deceived by herself. What a situation! I could let her

go, it is true. But the dowry, the handsome dowry, the good dowry, palpable and sure! And then, had I the right to let her go, the poor girl, after having thus surprised her? But what of the disquiet later on? How much security would one have with a woman who thus yielded?

"I passed a terrible night of indecision, tortured by remorse, ravaged by fears, buffeted by every scruple. But in the morning, my reason cleared. I dressed myself with care, and, as eleven o'clock struck, presented myself at the hotel where she was staying.

"On seeing me, she blushed to the eyes. I said to her: 'Mademoiselle Chantefrise, there is only one thing to do to repair our wrong. I ask your hand in marriage.'

"She murmured: 'I give it to you.'

"I married her and all went well for six months. I had given up my office and lived as a stockholder, and truly I had not a reproach, not a single fault to find with my wife.

"Then I noticed that, from time to time, she made long visits. This happened on a certain day, one week Tuesday, the next week Wednesday. I began to believe myself deceived and I followed her. It was on a Tuesday. She went out on foot about one o'clock into Republic street, turned to the right, by the street which follows the archiepiscopal palace, and took Great-Bridge street to the Seine, followed the wharf up to Peter's bridge and crossed the water. From this moment she appeared disturbed, turning around often and looking sharply at all passers.

"As I was dressed like a coal driver she did not know me. Finally, she entered a dock on the left bank. I no longer doubted that her lover would arrive on the one-forty-five train.

"I seated myself behind a dray and waited. A blow of the whistle—a crowd of passengers. She advanced, rushed forward, seized in her arms a little girl of three years, whom a large peasant accompanied, and embraced her with passion. Then she turned, perceived another child, younger, either girl or boy, it might be, carried by another nurse, threw herself upon it, drew it to her with violence, and went along escorted by the two monkeys and the two nurses toward the long, somber, deserted promenade of the Queen's Course.

"I returned home dismayed, distressed in mind, comprehending and still not comprehending, nor daring to guess. When she returned for dinner, I threw these words at her:

"'Whose children are those?'

"'What children?' she asked.

"'Those that you waited at the Saint-Sever train for.'

"She gave a great cry and fainted. When she returned to consciousness she confessed to me, in a deluge of tears, that she had four. Yes, sir, two for Tuesday, two girls, and two for Wednesday, two boys.

"And this was—what shame! this was the origin of her fortune. The four fathers! She had amassed her dowry! Now sir, what do you advise me to do?"

The advocate replied with gravity: "Recognize your children, sir."

THE TOBACCO SHOP

I WENT down to Barviller alone because I saw in the guidebook (I do not remember which one): "A beautiful museum, two Rubens, one Tenier, and a Ribera." I thought to myself: "I will see that. Then I will dine at the Hotel Europe, which the guidebook affirms excellent, and return to-morrow."

The museum was closed. They only opened it at the request of travelers. It was opened for my benefit, and I was able to look upon some daubs attributed by a whimsical collector to the first masters of painting.

After that, I found myself alone with absolutely nothing to do. I was in a long street of a little unknown town, a kind of artery, through which I wandered, examining some of the poor little shops. I found it was only four o'clock, and I was suddenly seized with that feeling of discouragement which makes simpletons of the most energetic.

What could I do? Great heavens! what was there to do? I would have paid five hundred francs for some distracting idea. Finding myself barren of invention,

I simply decided to smoke a good cigar, and looked about for a tobacco shop. I soon recognized one by its red lantern and entered it. The saleswoman held out several boxes for me to choose from. Having looked carefully at the cigars, all of which appeared detestable, I turned by chance and glanced at the proprietress.

She was a woman of about forty-five, strong and gray-haired. She had a fat, respectable face, in which I seemed to see something familiar. Could I have known this woman somewhere? No, assuredly not. But it might be that I had seen her somewhere? Yes, that was possible. The face before me must be an acquaintance of my eyes, some old acquaintance lost to sight and, without doubt, changed by being enormously fattened.

I murmured: "Excuse, me, Madame, for looking at you so closely, but it seems to me that I have seen you before, long ago."

She responded, blushing a little: "It is strange—but I also—"

I exclaimed: "Ah! so it goes!"

She raised both hands in a comical despair, frightened by the sound of the old name, and stammered: "Oh! oh!—if anyone should hear you—" Then suddenly she cried out, in her turn: "Wait! It is you—George!" Then she looked around in terror to see if anyone were listening. But we were alone, all alone!

"So-it-Goes!" How had I ever recognized her! "So-it-Goes," the poor "So-it-Goes," the thin, the desolate "So-it-Goes," transformed into this fat, tranquil functionary of the government?

"So-it-Goes!" How many memories this name suddenly awakened in me: Bougival, "The Frog," Chatou, the Fournaise restaurant, long journeys in a yawl along the steep banks, in short, ten years of my life, passed in that corner of the country, upon that delicious part of the river.

There was a band of a dozen of us inhabiting the Galopois house, at Chatou, living a queer kind of life, half nude and half tipsy. The customs of canoeists have changed since then. Now, these gentlemen wear monocles.

Our band was composed of twenty canoeists, regular and irregular. On certain Sundays there would only be four of them, on others, all. That is to say, some were there to stay, others came when they had nothing better to do. Five or six of them lived together, after the fashion of men without wives, and among them dwelt "So-it-Goes."

She was a poor, thin girl who limped. This gave her some of the attractions of a grasshopper. She was timid, awkward, and unskillful in all that she did. With fear, she attached herself to the humblest, the most unnoticed of us, anyone who would keep her a day or a month, according to his means. How she ever came to be among us, nobody knew. Some one had met her one evening at poker-dice, at a riverside ball, and had been led into one of those raffles for wives that were so much the fashion. We invited her to lunch, seeing her seated alone at a little table in the corner. No one could have asked her, but she made a part of our band.

We baptized her "So-it-Goes" (*Ça Ira*), because she was always complaining of her destiny, of her

misfortune, and her sorrows. Each Sunday morning they would say to her: "Well, 'So-it-Goes,' how goes it?" And she would always answer: "Not so bad, but we must always hope that it will be better some day."

How this poor, ungraceful, awkward being came to adopt the trade which demands the most grace, tact, cleverness, and beauty, was a mystery. However, Paris is full of girls of love that are ugly enough to disgust a policeman.

What did she do the other six days of the week? She told us many times that she worked. At what? We were as ignorant of it as we were indifferent to her existence.

After that, I nearly lost sight of her. Our group had dispersed, little by little, leaving its place to another generation, to whom we also left "*Ça Ira.*" I heard of her in going to breakfast at the Fournaise from time to time.

Our successors, not knowing why we had christened her as we did, believed her name to be Oriental and called her Zaïra; then they bestowed her, with all their canoes and some of the canoeists, to the following generation. (A generation of canoeists generally lives three years upon the water, then leaves the Seine to enter the law, medicine, or politics.)

Zaïra had now become Zara, and later Zara was modified into Sarah. Then they thought she was an Israelite.

The last ones, those with the monocles, called her simply "the Jewess." Then she disappeared. And behold! I had found her in Barviller, selling tobacco.

I said to her: "Well, how goes it now?"

She answered: "A little better.

I had a curiosity to know the life of this woman. At any other time I would not have cared; to-day I felt interested, puzzled, attracted. I asked her: "How did you come to get this place?"

"I don't know," said she, "it came to me when I was expecting the least."

"Was it at Chatou that you came upon it?"

"Oh! no."

"Then where?"

"At Paris, in a hotel where I lived."

"Ah! then you had a place in Paris?"

"Yes, I was with Madame Ravelet."

"Who is she, this Madame Ravelet?"

"And you don't know who Madame Ravelet is? Well!"

"No, I do not."

"The dressmaker, the great dressmaker of Rivoli street."

And then she told me a thousand things of her former life, a thousand things of the secret life of the Parisian woman, the interior workings of a great dressmaking establishment, the life of the young ladies there, their adventures, their ideas, the whole story of the heart of a working girl, that sparrow-hawk of the sidewalk who haunts the streets—in the morning in going to the shop, at midday, strolling along bareheaded after her luncheon, and in the evening when she comes out to show herself.

Happy to speak of other days, she said: "You don't know what a mob it is, nor what raids they make. We used to tell each other about them every day. Truly, one can make a fool of a man, you know.

"The first tale I have to tell is on the subject of an umbrella. I had an old alpaca one, an umbrella to be ashamed of. As I was closing it upon my arrival one day, there was the tall Louise before me, saying:

"'What! You dare to go out with that?"

"'But I have no other, and at this moment funds are low.'

"They were always low, funds were.

"She said to me: 'Go and get one at the Madeleine.'

"I was astonished. She continued: 'That is where we all get ours; one can get all one wants there.' And then she explained the thing to me. It was very simple.

"I went with Irma to the Madeleine. We found the sexton and explained to him how we had forgotten an umbrella the week before. He asked us to describe the handle and I gave him a description of a handle with an agate apple on it. He took us into a room where there were more than fifty lost umbrellas; we looked them all over but I did not find mine; I had, however, chosen a beauty, a perfect beauty with a carved ivory handle. A few days after, Louise went and reclaimed it. She described it before seeing it, and he gave it to her without a suspicion.

"In order to do that sort of thing, one has to dress very stylish."

And she laughed, opening the cover of a large box of tobacco and letting it fall again upon its hinges. She continued:

"Oh! we each had our turn at it and we did

have some queer experiences. There were five of us living in the studio, four ordinaries and one very pretty, Irma, the beautiful Irma. She was very distinguished, as she had a lover in the Cabinet Council, but that did not hinder her from making him support her prettily. And one winter she said to us: 'You don't know what a way I have thought of to make a good thing?' And she told us her idea.

"You know, Irma had a face to trouble the heads of all men, and such a figure! and hips that would make the water come in your mouth. So she thought of a way for each of us to make a hundred francs to buy some rings with, and she arranged the thing like this:

"You must know that I was not rich at that moment, any more than the others; and we were scarcely making a hundred francs in a month at the shop, certainly not more. We wished to know her plan. We each had two or three lovers who gave a little, but not much; and it sometimes happened that in the noonday walk we nabbed a gentleman who would come the next day; we would keep him for two weeks and then give him up. Such men as that never give very much. Those at Chatou—that was for pleasure. Oh! if you only knew some of the sly things we did; truly you would die from laughter. So, when Irma proposed to us to make a hundred francs, we were all on fire. It is very bad, what I am going to tell you, but that makes no difference; you know what life is, and when one has stayed four years at Chatou—

"Well, she said to us: 'At the Opera Ball, we are going to get hold of some of the best men in

Paris, the most distinguished and the richest. I know who they are.'

"We did not believe it at first; because such men are not made for dressmakers; for Irma, yes, but not for us. Oh! she was so stylish, that Irma! Do you know, we had the habit at the studio of saying that if the Emperor had seen her, he would certainly have married her.

"She made us dress ourselves in our best, and said to us: 'You, none of you will enter the ball-room, but will stay outside in cabs in the neighboring streets. A gentleman will come and get into your carriage. When he has entered, you will embrace him as prettily as you can; and then, you will utter a great cry to show that you have made a mistake and that you expected some one else. This will excite the pigeon to take the place of another, and he will try to remain by force; you will resist, you will give him a hundred blows to drive him away—and then—you will go to supper with him—and you ought to get good damages.'

"You do not quite understand it yet, do you? Well, here is what she did, the rogue!

"She made all four of us get into carriages, four carriages of the circle, that were just as they should be, then she placed us in streets near the Opera. She went to the ball alone. As she knew by name the most conspicuous men in Paris, because our establishment catered to their wives, she chose them for her intrigue. She could talk with them about anything, for she had a mind also. When she saw that one was half drunk, she threw off her mask, and he was taken as in a net. He wished to take

her away immediately, but she preferred to make an appointment with him in half an hour, in a carriage opposite No. 20 Taitbout street. It was I who was in that carriage! I was well wrapped up and my face veiled. Suddenly a gentleman put his head in the door and asked: 'Is it you?'

"And I answered in a low tone: 'Yes, it is I; get in quickly.'

"He does so and I seize him in my arms and embrace him, until his breath is almost gone; then I say:

"'Oh! I am so happy! I am so happy!'

"But suddenly I cry out: 'But it is not you! Oh! dear! oh! dear!' And I begin to weep.

"You can judge whether the man is embarrassed or not! He tries to console me; he excuses himself and protests that he is also mistaken. As for me, I keep on weeping, but less and less; and I utter great sighs. Then he says very sweet things to me.

"He was a man that was a man; and it pleased him to see me weeping less and less. To put a short thread in the needle, he proposed to take me to supper. I refused; I tried to leap from the carriage; he held me by taking me around the waist; then he embraced me, as I had him upon his entrance.

"And then — and then — we had supper — you understand — and he gave me — think of it — he gave me five hundred francs! Would you believe that there are such generous men?

"And the thing was a success for everybody. Louise, who received the least, got two hundred

francs. But you know, Louise—truly, she was very thin!"

The woman of the tobacco shop went on thus, emptying her heart of all the memories amassed in the long time that she had been shut up with her official duties. The past, poor and queer though it was, moved her soul. She regretted this gallant, Bohemian life of the Parisian sidewalk, made up of privations and paid-for caresses, of laughter and misery, of moments of stratagem and true love.

I said to her: "But how did you get into the tobacco business?"

She smiled, saying: "Oh! that is a story, too. You must know that I had for a neighbor in my apartment, exactly opposite my door, a student—but one of those students who amount to nothing. This one lived at the *café* from morning until evening; he loved billiards, as I have never seen anyone love the game.

"When I was alone, we sometimes passed the evening together. It is by him that I had Roger."

"Who is Roger?"

"My son."

"Ah!"

"He—he gave me a little pension for the boy's education, but I did not think that man would ever amount to anything, as I had never seen a man so idle, never. At the end of ten years, he was still in his first examinations. When his family saw that he would do nothing, they called him home to the provinces; but we remained in correspondence on account of the child. And then, imagine! at the last

elections, two years ago, I learned that he had been made a deputy in his county. And then he made some speeches in the Assembly. Truly, in a kingdom of blind men, as the saying is— But, to finish, I went to find him, and immediately he obtained this tobacco business for me, as the daughter of an exile— It is true my father was exiled, but I had never thought of this fact serving me in any way.

"Briefly—wait! here is Roger."

A tall, young man entered, grave, correct, and proper.

He kissed his mother on the brow and she said: "This, sir, is my son, head-clerk at the mayor's office. You know, he may be a future subprefect."

I saluted this functionary in a worthy manner, and went back to my hotel, after having pressed with gravity the extended hand of "So-it-Goes."

A POOR GIRL

YES, the memory of that evening can never be effaced. For half an hour I had the sinister sensation of invincible fatality; I had the same shivers that one has in descending the shaft of a mine. I touched the black depths of human misery; I seemed to comprehend fully how impossible an honest life is under some conditions.

It was just past midnight. I was going from the Vaudeville to Drouot street, following a crowd on the Boulevard, all carrying umbrellas. A deluge of water poured rather than fell, veiling the gas jets and giving the street a sad appearance. The sidewalk glittered, more sticky than wet. The mass of people pressed on, seeing nothing.

Girls, with skirts raised, showed their ankles, allowing a white stocking to peep out in the dim nocturnal light, and waited in shadowed doorways. Some called to and some, bolder, jostled the passers, pronouncing in their ears two obscene, stupid words. They would follow a man some seconds, and push

against him, breathing in his face their putrid breath. Then, seeing their beguilements useless, they would leave him with an abrupt, discontented motion and start on again, swinging their hips.

I went along, spoken to by all, taken by the sleeve, harassed and moved with disgust. Suddenly, I saw three of them running as if frightened, talking to each other in rapid fashion. Others also began to run, to flee, holding their robes with both hands, in order to run more quickly. That day a blow had been given to the network of prostitution.

All at once I felt an arm under mine, while a terrified voice murmured in my ear: "Save me, sir, save me; do not leave me."

I looked at the girl. She was not twenty years old, yet faded already. I said to her: "Remain with me." And she murmured: "Oh! thank you!"

We arrived at the line of agents. She disclosed herself in order to let me pass. I met her farther on in Drouot street.

My companion asked: "Will you come home with me?"

"No."

"Why not? You have rendered me a service that I shall not forget."

I answered, so not to embarrass her: "Because I am married."

"What difference does that make?"

"You see, my child, that is sufficient. I have helped you out of your difficulty, leave me quietly now."

The street was deserted and dark, truly unpleasant. And this woman, who held me by the arm, rendered

more frightful still the sensation of sadness which enveloped me. She wished to embrace me. I recoiled with horror. And in a hard voice she said: "Once, for peace, won't you?"

And she made a movement of rage, then abruptly began to sob. I stood lost in wonder, not quite comprehending. Finally I said:

"Tell me, what is the matter with you?"

She murmured through her tears: "If you only knew it, it is not gay, this isn't."

"What is not gay?"

"This kind of life."

"Why have you chosen it, then?"

"It was not my fault."

"Whose fault was it?"

"I know whose, I do."

A kind of interest in this abandoned creature took me and I said:

"Tell me your story."

And she told it to me.

"I was sixteen years old and in service at Yvetot at the house of Mr. Lerable, a grain dealer. My parents were dead. I had no one. I saw, of course, that my master looked at me in a queer way, and that he pinched my cheeks; and I had not long to ask myself what he meant. I knew things, certainly. In the country, one is sharpened. But Mr. Lerable was old and devout, going to mass every Sunday. I somehow never believed him capable! But the day came when he wished to take me in my kitchen. I resisted him, but it was done.

"There was opposite us a grocer, Mr. Dunstan,

who had a very pleasant boy in his shop; so much so that I allowed myself to be cajoled by him. That happens to everybody, does it not? I would leave the door open evenings that he might come in.

"But one night M. Lerable heard some noise. He went up and found Antoine and tried to kill him. It was a battle with chairs, jugs of water, and everything. As for me, I found my courage and fled into the street. That was how I started out.

"I was afraid, afraid of the world. But I dressed myself under a doorway and began to walk straight on. I believed of a truth that some one had been killed and that the policemen were after me already. I reached the highway to Rouen. I told myself that at Rouen I should be concealed well enough.

"It was so dark I could not see the ditches, and I heard the dogs barking on the farms. Do you know all the things one hears at night? There are birds that cry like a man being murdered, beasts that yap and beasts that whistle, and many other things that I do not understand. I was all goose flesh. Each step I made the sign of the cross. One cannot imagine how the heart can be helped by that. When the day appeared, the idea of the policemen always took me by force, and I ran all that I could. Then I tried to calm myself.

"I felt hungry, all the same, in spite of my fear; but I had not anything, not one sou, for I had forgotten my money, all that I had on earth, which was eighteen francs. So I was obliged to walk with an empty stomach.

"It was hot. The sun burned. Midday was past, and I kept going on. Suddenly I heard some

horses behind me. I turned to look. The mounted policemen! My blood gave a leap; I thought I should fall; but I went on. They would catch me. They were looking at me now. Then one of them, the elder said:

"'Good day, Mademoiselle.'

"'Good day, sir.'

"'Where are you going to?'

"'I am going to Rouen, in service at a place that has been offered me.'

"'Walking, like this?'

"'Yes, walking.'

"My heart beat, sir, so that I could say no more. I kept thinking to myself: 'Now they will take me.' And I had such a desire to run that my legs danced. But they would have caught me immediately, you see.

"The old one began: 'We can journey together as far as Barantin, Mademoiselle, since we are taking the same route.'

"'With pleasure, sir,' I said.

"And we chatted a little. I made myself as pleasant as I could, you see; so much so that they believed what was not so. Then, as we passed into a wood, the old one said: 'Would you like to stop and rest a little on this moss?'

"And I, without thinking, said: 'As you wish, sir.'

"Then he dismounted and gave his horse to the other, and we two went away in the wood. There was nothing to be said. What could you have done in my place? He took what he wished and then said to me: 'It won't do to forget the comrade.'

"He returned to the horses and the other rejoined me. I was so much ashamed that I could have wept, sir. But I dared not resist, you understand. Then we went on our way. I could speak no more, I had too much grief in my heart. And then I could no longer walk, I was so hungry. But in the village they gave me a glass of wine, which gave me new force for some time. And then they took to the trot, so not to go through Barantin in my company. And I seated myself by a ditch and wept until I had no more tears.

"I walked then for three hours more before reaching Rouen. It was seven o'clock in the evening when I arrived there. At first all the lights dazzled me. And then, I did not know where I could sit down to rest. On the way there were the ditches and the grass where I could even lie down and sleep. But in the city, nothing.

"My limbs refused to hold my body, and I felt as if I were going to fall. And then it began to rain, a little fine rain, like this evening, which goes through you without your knowing it. I have no luck when it rains. I commenced to walk the streets. I looked at all the houses, saying to myself: 'There are beds and bread in there; but I cannot find as much as a crust or a bed of straw.'

"I went through some streets where women were speaking to men along the way. In such cases, sir, one must do what one can. I took my place with the others, inviting everybody. But no one answered me. I wished I was dead. This must have been near midnight. I no longer knew what I did. Finally, a man listened to me. He asked me: 'Where

do you live?' Some kind of ruse was necessary, and I answered: 'I cannot take you to my house, for I live with mamma. But are there not some houses where we could go?'

"He answered. 'It is not often that I spend twenty sous for a room.' Then he added: 'Come along. I know a quiet spot where we shall not be interrupted.'

"He made me pass over a bridge, then led me to the end of the town, into a meadow near the river. I could do nothing but follow him. He made me sit down and then began to ask why we had come there. As he was long in his affair, I found myself so worn out with fatigue that I fell asleep. He went away without giving me anything. I could not see a single step. Since that day I have had troubles that I can never be cured of, because I slept all that night in the wet.

"I was awakened by two officers who took me to the station house and then to prison, where I stayed eight days, while they tried to find out who I was and where I had come from. I would not tell for fear of the consequences. They found out, however, and released me, after a verdict of innocence.

"Then it was necessary for me to make my living. I tried to find a place, but I could not because I had come out of prison. Then I recalled the old judge, who had a turn to his eye, while he was judging me, like that of father Lerable of Yvetot. And I went to find him. I was not deceived. He gave me a hundred sous when I left him, saying: 'You shall have as much every time; but don't come too often; not more than twice a week.' I understood that

well, because of his age. But it gave me a reflection: I said to myself: 'Young people make merry and amuse themselves, but they are never fat, while with the old it is the other way.' And since then I can always tell them, these old apes with their eyes in a groove and a little ghost of a head.

"Do you know what I did, sir? I dressed up like a country girl who had come to market and I walked the streets for my living. Oh! I could pinch them at the first blow. I would say to myself: 'Here is one who will bite.' He would approach. And then commence:

"'Good day, Mademoiselle.'

"'Good day, sir.'

"'Where are you going, like this?'

"'I am returning home to master's.'

"'Do they live far, your people?'

"'Rather far, but not so very.'

"Then he would not know what to say, and I would make my step a little slower to allow him to explain. Then he would give me some compliments, in a low voice, and then ask me to go home with him. I would refuse at first, you understand, and then yield. I had two or three of that sort each morning, and all my afternoons free. That was the good time of my life. I was not made of spleen.

"But it seems one can never be quiet for a long time. It was my misfortune to make the acquaintance of a rich man of the world, an old president, who was all of seventy-five years old. One evening he took me to dine in a restaurant of the neighborhood. And then, you understand, he did not know how to be moderate. He was dead at the dessert.

"I had three months in prison, because I was not under superintendence. Then I came to Paris. And, oh! sir, it is hard here! hard to live! One cannot expect to eat every day, there are too many. But that is only so much the worse. Each to his trouble, don't you say so?"

She was silent. I walked along by her side, my heart touched. Suddenly she began to be familiar with me, saying:

"So you will not go home with me, my dear?"

"No, I have told you so already.'

"Oh! well, good-bye, and thanks all the same, without any hard feeling; but I assure you that you are wrong."

And she went away, plunging into the rain which was as fine as a veil. I watched her pass under a gas jet and then disappear in a shadow. Poor girl!

THE SUBSTITUTE

"MADAME BONDEROI?"

"Yes, Madame Bonderoi."

"Impossible."

"I tell you it is."

"Madame Bonderoi, the old lady in a lace cap, the devout, the holy, the honorable Madame Bonderoi, whose little false curls look as if they were glued round her head."

"That is the very woman."

"Oh! Come you must be mad."

"I swear to you that it is Madame Bonderoi."

"Then please give me the details."

'Here they are: During the life of Monsieur Bonderoi, the lawyer, people said that she utilized his clerks for her own particular service. She is one of these respectable middle-class women, with secret vices and inflexible principles, of whom there are so many. She liked good-looking young fellows, and I should like to know what is more natural than that? Do not we all like pretty girls?

"As soon as old Bonderoi was dead, his widow began to live the peaceful and irreproachable life of a woman with a fair, fixed income. She went to church assiduously, and spoke evil of her neighbors, but gave no chance to anyone to speak ill of her, and when she grew old she became the little wizened, sour-faced mischievous woman whom you know. Well, this adventure, which you would scarcely believe, happened last Friday.

"My friend, Jean d'Anglemare, is, as you know, a captain in a dragoon regiment, which is quartered in the barracks in the Rue de la Rivette. When he got to his quarters the other morning, he found that two men of his squadron had had a terrible quarrel. The rules about military honor are very severe, and so a duel took place between them. After the duel they became reconciled, and when their officer questioned them, they told him what their quarrel had been about. They had fought on Madame Bonderoi's account."

"Oh!"

"Yes, my dear fellow, about Madame Bonderoi. 'But I will let trooper Siballe speak":

"'This is how it was, Captain. About a year and a half ago, I was lounging about the barrack-yard, between six and seven o'clock in the evening, when a woman came up and spoke to me, and said, just as if she had been asking her way: "Soldier, would you like to earn ten francs a week, honestly?" Of course I told her that I should, and so she said: "Come and see me at twelve o'clock to-morrow morning. I am Madame Bonderoi, and my address is No. 6, Rue de la Tranchée."

"'"You may rely upon my being there, Madame." And then she went away, looking very pleased, and added: "I am very much obliged to you, soldier."

"'"I am obliged to you, Madame," I replied. But I plagued my head about the matter, until the time came, all the same.

"'At twelve o'clock, exactly, I rang the bell, and she let me in herself. She had a lot of ribbons on her head.

"'"We must make haste," she said; "as my servant might come in."

"'"I am quite willing to make haste," I replied, "but what am I to do?"

"'But she only laughed, and replied: "Don't you understand, you great stupid?"

"'I was no nearer her meaning, I give you my word of honor, Captain, but she came and sat down by me, and said:

"'"If you mention this to anyone, I will have you put in prison, so swear that you will never open your lips about it."

"'I swore whatever she liked, though I did not at all understand what she meant. My forehead was covered with perspiration, so I took my pocket-handkerchief out of my helmet. She took it and wiped my brow with it; then she kissed me, and whispered: "Then you will?"

"'"I will do anything you like, Madame," I replied; "as that is what I came for."

"'Then she made herself clearly understood by her actions, and when I saw what it was, I put my helmet on a chair and showed her that in the dragoons a man never retires, Captain.

"'Not that I cared much about it, for she was certainly not in her prime, but it is no good being too particular in such a matter, as francs are scarce, and then I have relations whom I like to help. I said to myself: "There will be five francs for my father, out of that."

"'When I had finished my allotted task, Captain, I got ready to go, though she wanted me to stop longer, but I said to her:

"'"To everyone their due, Madame. A small glass of brandy costs two sous, and two glasses cost four."

"'She understood my meaning, and put a gold ten-franc piece into my hand. I do not like that coin. It is so small that if your pockets are not very well made, and come at all unsewn, one is apt to find it in one's boots, or not to find it at all, and so, while I was looking at it, she was looking at me. She got red in the face, as she had misunderstood my looks, and said: "Is not that enough?"

"'"I did not mean that, Madame," I replied; "but if it is all the same to you, I would rather have two five-franc pieces." And she gave them to me, and I took my leave.

"'This has been going on for a year and a half, Captain. I go every Tuesday evening, when you give me leave to go out of barracks; she prefers that, as her servant has gone to bed then, but last week I was not well, and I had to go into the infirmary. When Tuesday came I could not get out, and I was very vexed, because of the ten francs which I had been receiving every week, and I said to myself:

"'"If anybody goes there, I shall be done for; and she will be sure to take an artilleryman," and

that made me very angry. So I sent for Paumelle, who comes from my part of the country, and I told him how matters stood:

"'"There will be five francs for you, and five for me," I said. He agreed, and went, as I had given him full instructions. She opened the door as soon as he knocked, and let him in, and as she did not look at his face, she did not perceive that it was not I, for you know, Captain, one dragoon is very like another with a helmet on.

"'Suddenly, however, she noticed the change, and she asked, angrily: "Who are you? What do you want? I do not know you."

"'Then Paumelle explained matters; he told her that I was not well, and that I had sent him as my substitute; so she looked at him, made him also swear to keep the matter secret, and then she accepted him, as you may suppose, for Paumelle is not a bad-looking fellow, either. But when he came back, Captain, he would not give me my five francs. If they had been for myself, I should not have said a word, but they were for my father, and on that score I would stand no nonsense, and said to him:

"'"You are not particular in what you do, for a dragoon; you are a discredit to your uniform."

"'He raised his fist, Captain, saying that fatigue duty like that was worth double. Of course, everybody has his own ideas, and he ought not to have accepted it. You know the rest.'

"Captain d'Anglemare laughed until he cried as he told me the story, but he also made me promise to keep the matter a secret, just as he had promised the

two soldiers. So, above all, do not betray me, but promise me to keep it to yourself."

"Oh! You may be quite easy about that. But how was it all arranged in the end?"

"How? It is a joke in a thousand! Mother Bonderoi keeps her two dragoons, and reserves his own particular day for each of them, and in that way, everybody is satisfied."

"Oh! That is capital! Really capital!"

"And he can send his old father and mother the money as usual, and thus morality is satisfied."

A PASSION

THE sea was brilliant and unruffled, scarcely stirred, and on the pier the entire town of Havre watched the ships as they came on.

They could be seen at a distance, in great numbers, some of them, the steamers, with plumes of smoke; the others, the sailing vessels, drawn by almost invisible tugs, lifting toward the sky their bare masts, like leafless trees. They hurried from every end of the horizon toward the narrow mouth of the jetty which devoured these monsters; and they groaned, they shrieked, they hissed while they spat out puffs of steam like animals panting for breath.

Two young officers were walking on the landing-stage, where a number of people were waiting, saluting or returning salutes, and sometimes stopping to chat.

Suddenly, one of them, the taller, Paul d'Henricol, pressed the arm of his comrade, Jean Renoldi, then, in a whisper, said:

"Hallo, here's Madame Poincot; give a good look at her. I assure you that she's making eyes at you.'

She was moving along on the arm of her husband. She was a woman of about forty, very handsome still, slightly stout, but, owing to her graceful fullness of figure, as fresh as she was at twenty. Among her friends she was known as the Goddess, on account of her proud gait, her large black eyes, and the air of nobility attached to her person. She remained irreproachable; never had the least suspicion cast a breath on her life's purity. She was regarded as the very type of a virtuous, uncorrupted woman—so upright that no man had ever dared to think of her.

And yet for the last month Paul d'Henricol had been assuring his friend Renoldi that Madame Poincot was in love with him, and he maintained that there was no doubt of it.

"Be sure I don't deceive myself. I see it clearly. She loves you—she loves you passionately, like a chaste woman who had never loved. Forty years is a terrible age for virtuous women when they possess senses; they become foolish, and commit utter follies. She is hit, my dear fellow; she is falling like a wounded bird, and is ready to drop into your arms. I say—just look at her!"

The tall woman, preceded by her two daughters, aged twelve and fifteen years, suddenly turned pale, on her approach, as her eyes lighted on the officer's face. She gave him an ardent glance, concentrating her gaze upon him, and no longer seemed to have any eyes for her children, her husband, or any other person around her. She returned the salutation of the two young men without lowering her eyes, glowing with such a flame that a doubt, at last, forced its way into Lieutenant Renoldi's mind.

His friend said, in the same hushed voice: "I was sure of it. Did you not notice her this time? By Jove, she is a nice woman!"

* * * * * * *

But Jean Renoldi had no desire for a society intrigue. Caring little for love, he longed, above all, for a quiet life, and contented himself with occasional amours such as a young man can always have. All the sentimentality, the attentions, and the tenderness which a well-bred woman exacts bored him. The chain, however slight it might be, which is always formed by an adventure of this sort, filled him with fear. He said: "At the end of a month I'll have had enough of it, and I'll be forced to wait patiently for six months through politeness."

Then a rupture would exasperate him, with the scenes, the illusions, the clinging attachment, of the abandoned woman.

He avoided meeting Madame Poincot.

But one evening he found himself by her side at a dinner-party, and he felt on his skin, in his eyes, and even in his heart, the burning glance of his fair neighbor. Their hands met, and almost involuntarily were pressed together in a warm clasp. Already the intrigue was almost begun.

He saw her again, always in spite of himself. He realized that he was loved. He felt himself moved by a kind of pitying vanity when he saw what a violent passion for him swayed this woman's breast. So he allowed himself to be adored, and merely displayed gallantry, hoping that the affair would be only sentimental.

But, one day, she made an appointment with him for the ostensible purpose of seeing him and talking freely to him. She fell, swooning, into his arms; and he had no alternative but to be her lover.

And this lasted six months. She loved him with an unbridled, panting love. Absorbed in this frenzied passion, she no longer bestowed a thought on anything else. She surrendered herself to it utterly; her body, her soul, her reputation, her position, her happiness,—she had cast all into that fire of her heart, as one casts, as a sacrifice, every precious object into a funeral pyre.

He had for some time grown tired of her, and deeply regretted his easy conquest as a fascinating officer; but he was bound, held prisoner. At every moment she said to him: "I have given you everything. What more would you have?" He felt a desire to answer:

"But I have asked nothing from you, and I beg of you to take back what you gave me."

Without caring about being seen, compromised, ruined, she came to see him every evening, her passion becoming more inflamed each time they met. She flung herself into his arms, strained him in a fierce embrace, fainted under the force of rapturous kisses which to him were now terribly wearisome.

He said in a languid tone: "Look here! be reasonable!"

She replied:

"I love you," and sank on her knees gazing at him for a long time in an attitude of admiration. At length, exasperated by her persistent gaze, he tried to make her rise.

"Sit down. Let us talk," he said.

She murmured: "No, leave me"; and remained there, her soul in a state of ecstasy.

He said to his friend D'Henricol:

"You know, 'twill end by my beating her. I won't have any more of it! It must end, and that without further delay!" Then he went on: "What do you advise me to do?"

The other replied: "Break it off."

And Renoldi added. shrugging his shoulders:

"You speak indifferently about the matter; you believe that it is easy to break with a woman who tortures you with attention, who annoys you with kindnesses, who persecutes you with her affection, whose only care is to please you, and whose only wrong is that she gave herself to you in spite of you."

But suddenly, one morning the news came that the regiment was about to be removed from the garrison. Renoldi began to dance with joy. He was saved! Saved without scenes, without cries! Saved! All he had to do now was to wait patiently for two months more. Saved!

In the evening she came to him more excited than she had ever been before. She had heard the dreadful news, and, without taking off her hat, she caught his hands and pressed them nervously, with her eyes fixed on his and her voice vibrating and resolute.

"You are leaving," she said; "I know it. At first, I felt heartbroken; then, I understood what I had to do. I don't hesitate about doing it. I have come to give you the greatest proof of love that a woman can offer. I follow you. For you I am abandoning my

husband, my children, my family. I am ruining myself, but I am happy. It seems to me that I am giving myself to you over again. It is the last and the greatest sacrifice. I am yours forever!"

He felt a cold sweat down his back, and was seized with a dull and violent rage, the anger of weakness. However, he became calm, and, in a disinterested tone, with a show of kindness, he refused to accept her sacrifice, tried to appease her, to bring her to reason, to make her see her own folly! She listened to him, staring at him with her great black eyes and with a smile of disdain on her lips, and said not a word in reply. He went on talking to her, and when, at length, he stopped, she said merely:

"Can you really be a coward? Can you be one of those who seduce a woman and then throw her over, through sheer caprice?"

He became pale, and renewed his arguments; he pointed out to her the inevitable consequences of such an action to both of them as long as they lived —how their lives would be shattered and how the world would shut its doors against them. She replied obstinately: "What does it matter when we love each other?" Then, all of a sudden, he burst out furiously:

"Well, then, I will not. No—do you understand? I will not do it, and I forbid you to do it." Then, carried away by the rancorous feeling which had seethed within him so long, he relieved his heart:

"Ah! damn it all, you have now been sticking on to me for a long time in spite of myself, and the best thing for you now is to take yourself off. I'll be much obliged if you do so, upon my honor!"

She did not answer him, but her livid countenance began to look shriveled up, as if all her nerves and muscles had been twisted out of shape. And she went away without saying good-bye.

The same night she poisoned herself.

For a week she was believed to be in a hopeless condition. And in the city people gossiped about the case, and pitied her, excusing her sin on account of the violence of her passion, for overstrained emotions, becoming heroic through their intensity, always obtain forgiveness for whatever is blameworthy in them. A woman who kills herself is, so to speak, not an adulteress. And ere long there was a feeling of general reprobation against Lieutenant Renoldi for refusing to see her again—a unanimous sentiment of blame.

It was a matter of common talk that he had deserted her, betrayed her, ill treated her. The Colonel, overcome by compassion, brought his officer to book in a quiet way. Paul d'Henricol called on his friend: "Deuce take it, Renoldi, it's a damnable shame to let a woman die; it's not the right thing anyhow."

The other, enraged, told him to hold his tongue, whereupon D'Henricol made use of the word "infamy." The result was a duel, Renoldi was wounded, to the satisfaction of everybody, and was for some time confined to his bed.

She heard about it, and only loved him the more for it, believing that it was on her account he had fought the duel; but, as she was too ill to move, she was unable to see him again before the departure of the regiment.

He had been three months in Lille when he

received, one morning, a visit from the sister of his former mistress.

After long suffering and a feeling of dejection, which she could not conquer, Madame Poincot's life was now despaired of, and she merely asked to see him for a minute, only for a minute, before closing her eyes forever.

Absence and time had appeased the young man's satiety and anger; he was touched, moved to tears, and he started at once for Havre.

She seemed to be in the agonies of death. They were left alone together; and by the bedside of this woman whom he now believed to be dying and whom he blamed himself for killing, though it was not by his own hand, he was fairly crushed with grief. He burst out sobbing, embraced her with tender, passionate kisses, more lovingly than he had ever done in the past. He murmured in a broken voice:

"No, no, you shall not die! You shall get better! We shall love each other forever—forever!"

She said in faint tones:

"Then it is true. You do love me, after all?"

And he, in his sorrow for her misfortunes, swore, promised to wait till she had recovered, and full of loving pity, kissed again and again the emaciated hands of the poor woman whose heart was panting with feverish, irregular pulsations.

The next day, he returned to the garrison.

Six weeks later she went to meet him, quite old-looking, unrecognizable, and more enamored than ever.

In his condition of mental prostration, he consented to live with her. Then, when they remained

together as if they had been legally united, the same colonel who had displayed indignation with him for abandoning her, objected to this irregular connection as being incompatible with the good example officers ought to give in a regiment. He warned the lieutenant on the subject, and then furiously denounced his conduct, so Renoldi retired from the army.

He went to live in a village on the shore of the Mediterranean, the classic sea of lovers.

And three years passed. Renoldi, bent under the yoke, was vanquished, and became accustomed to the woman's unchanging devotion. His hair had now turned white.

He looked upon himself as a man done for, gone under. Henceforth, he had no hope, no ambition, no satisfaction in life, and he looked forward to no pleasure in existence.

But one morning a card was placed in his hand, with the name — "Joseph Poincot, Shipowner, Havre."

The husband! The husband, who had said nothing, realizing that there was no use in struggling against the desperate obstinacy of women. What did he want?

He was waiting in the garden, having refused to come into the house. He bowed politely, but would not sit down, even on a bench in a gravel-path, and he commenced talking clearly and slowly.

"Monsieur, I did not come here to address reproaches to you. I know too well how things happened. I have been the victim of—we have been the victims of—a kind of fatality. I would never have disturbed you in your retreat if the situation had not changed. I have two daughters, Monsieur.

One of them, the elder, loves a young man, and is loved by him, But the family of this young man is opposed to the marriage, basing their objection on the situation of—my daughter's mother. I have no feeling of either anger or spite, but I love my children, Monsieur. I have, therefore, come to ask my wife to return home. I hope that to-day she will consent to go back to my house—to her own house. As for me, I will make a show of having forgotten, for—for the sake of my daughters."

Renoldi felt a wild movement in his heart, and he was inundated with a delirium of joy like a condemned man who receives a pardon.

He stammered: "Why, yes—certainly, Monsieur—I myself—be assured of it—no doubt—it is right, it is only quite right."

This time M. Poincot no longer declined to sit down.

Renoldi then rushed up the stairs, and pausing at the door of his mistress's room, to collect his senses, entered gravely.

"There is somebody below waiting to see you," he said. "'Tis to tell you something about your daughters."

She rose. "My daughters? What about them? They are not dead?"

He replied: "No; but a serious situation has arisen, which you alone can settle."

She did not wait to hear more, but rapidly descended the stairs.

Then he sank down on a chair, greatly moved, and waited.

He waited a long, long time. Then he heard

angry voices below stairs, and made up his mind to go down.

Madame Poincot was standing up exasperated, just on the point of going away, while her husband had seized hold of her dress, exclaiming: "But remember that you are destroying our daughters, your daughters, our children!"

She answered stubbornly:

"I will not go back to you!"

Renoldi understood everything, came over to them in a state of great agitation, and gasped:

"What, does she refuse to go?"

She turned toward him, and, with a kind of shamefacedness, addressing him without any familiarity of tone in the presence of her legitimate husband, said:

"Do you know what he asks me to do? He wants me to go back, and live under one roof with him!"

And she tittered with a profound disdain for this man, who was appealing to her almost on his knees.

Then Renoldi with the determination of a desperate man playing his last card began talking to her in his turn, and pleaded the cause of the poor girls, the cause of the husband, his own cause. And when he stopped, trying to find some fresh argument, M. Poincot, at his wits' end, murmured, in the affectionate style in which he used to speak to her in days gone by:

"Look here, Delphine! Think of your daughters!"

Then she turned on both of them a glance of sovereign contempt, and, after that, flying with a bound

toward the staircase, she flung at them these scornful words:

"You are a pair of wretches!"

Left alone, they gazed at each other for a moment, both equally crestfallen, equally crushed. M. Poincot picked up his hat, which had fallen down near where he sat, dusted off his knees the signs of kneeling on the floor, then raising both hands sorrowfully, while Renoldi was seeing him to the door, remarked with a parting bow:

"We are very unfortunate, Monsieur."

Then he walked away from the house with a heavy step.

CAUGHT

A YOUNG and charming lady, who was a member of the Viennese aristocracy, went last summer, without her husband, as many young and charming ladies do, to a fashionable Austrian watering place, Karlsbad, much frequented by foreigners.

As is usually the case in their rank of life, she had married from family considerations and for money; and the short spell of love after marriage was not sufficient to take deep root. After she had satisfied family traditions and her husband's wishes by giving birth to a son and heir, they both went their way; the young, handsome, and fascinating man to his clubs, to the race-course, and behind the scenes at the theaters, and his charming, coquettish wife to her box at the opera, to the south in winter, and to some fashionable watering-place in the summer.

On the present occasion she brought with her from one of the latter resorts a young, very highly-connected Pole who enjoyed all the rights and the

liberty of an avowed favorite, and performed all the duties of a slave.

As is usual in such cases, the lady rented a small house in one of the suburbs of Vienna, had it beautifully furnished, and received her lover there. She was always dressed very attractively, sometimes as "La Belle Hélène" in Offenbach's opera, only rather more after the ancient Greek fashion; another time as an *odalisque* in the Sultan's harem, and another time as a light-hearted Suabian girl, and so forth. In winter, however, she grew tired of such meetings, and as she wanted to have matters arranged more comfortably she took it into her head to receive her lover in her own house. But how was it to be done?

That, however, gave her no particular difficulty, as is the case with every woman, when once she has made up her mind to a thing. After thinking it over for a day or two she went to the next rendezvous, with a fully prepared plan of war.

The Pole was one of those types of handsome men which are rare. He was almost womanly in the delicacy of his features, of middle height, slim, and well-made, and resembled a youthful Bacchus who might very easily be made to pass for a Venus by the help of false locks—the more so as there was not even the slightest down on his lips. The lady, therefore, who was very fertile in resources, suggested to the handsome Pole that he might just as well transform himself into a handsome Polish lady, so that he might, under cover of the feminine, be able to visit her undisturbed. As it was winter, a thick, heavy, voluminous dress assisted the metamorphosis.

The lady, accordingly, bought a number of very beautiful costumes for her lover, and in the course of a few days told her husband that a charming young Polish lady, whose acquaintance she had made in the summer at Karlsbad, was going to spend the winter in Vienna, and would very frequently come and see her. Her husband listened to her with the greatest indifference, for it was one of his fundamental rules never to make love to any of his wife's female friends. He went to his club as usual at night, and the next day had forgotten all about the Polish lady.

Half an hour after the husband had left the house, a cab drove up, and a tall, slim, heavily veiled lady got out and went up the thickly carpeted stairs, only to be metamorphosed into the most ardent lover in the young woman's boudoir. The young Pole grew accustomed to his female attire so quickly that he even ventured to appear in the streets in it, and when he began to make conquests, and aristocratic gentlemen and successful speculators on the Stock Exchange looked at him significantly and even followed him, he took a real pleasure in the part he was playing, beginning to understand the pleasure a coquette feels in tormenting men.

The young Pole became more and more daring, until one evening he went to a private box at the opera, wrapped in an ermine cloak, on to which his dark, false curls fell in heavy waves.

A handsome young man in a box opposite to him ogled him incessantly from the first moment, and the young Pole responded in a manner which made the other bolder every minute. At the end of the third act the box-opener brought the fictitious Venus a

small bouquet with a card concealed in it, on which was written in pencil:

"You are the most lovely woman in the world, and I implore you on my knees to grant me an interview."

The young Pole read the name of the man who had been captivated so quickly, and, with a peculiar smile, wrote on a card on which nothing but the name "Valeska" was printed: "After the theater," and sent Cupid's messenger back with it.

When the spurious Venus was about to enter her carriage after the performance, thickly veiled and wrapped in her ermine cloak, the handsome young man was standing by it with his hat off, and he opened the door for her. She was kind enough to allow him to get in with her, and during their drive she talked to him in the most charming manner, but she was cruel enough to dismiss him without pity before they reached her house. She went to the theater each night now, and every evening received an ardent note. Each evening she allowed the amorous swain to accompany her as far as her house, and men were beginning to envy him his brilliant conquest, when a catastrophe happened which was very surprising for all concerned.

The husband of the lady in whose eyes the Pole had found favor surprised the loving couple one day under circumstances which made any justification impossible. But while he, trembling with rage and jealousy, was drawing a small Circassian dagger which hung against the wall from its sheath, and as his wife threw herself, half fainting on to a couch, the young Pole had hastily put the false curls on to

his head and had slipped into the silk dress and the sable cloak which he had been wearing when he came into his mistress's boudoir.

"What does this mean," the husband stammered, "Valeska?"

"Yes, sir," the young Pole replied; "Valeska, who has come here to show your wife a few love letters, which—"

"No, no," the deceived, but nevertheless guilty, husband said in imploring accents; "no that is quite unnecessary." And at the same time he put the dagger back into its sheath.

"Very well, then, there is a truce between us," the Pole observed coolly, "but do not forget what weapons I possess, and which I mean to retain against all contingencies."

Then the gentlemen bowed politely to each other, and the unexpected meeting came to an end.

From that time forward the terms on which the young married couple lived together assumed the character of that everlasting peace which President Grant once promised the whole world in his message to all nations. The young woman did not find it necessary to make her lover put on petticoats, and the husband constantly accompanies the real Valeska a good deal further than he did the false one on that memorable occasion.

THE ORDERLY

THE cemetery, filled with officers, looked like a field covered with flowers. The *képis* and the red trousers, the stripes and the gold buttons, the shoulder-knots of the staff, the braid of the chasseurs and the hussars, passed through the midst of the tombs, whose crosses, white or black, opened their mournful arms—their arms of iron, marble, or wood—over the vanished race of the dead.

Colonel Limousin's wife had just been buried. She had been drowned, two days before, while taking a bath. It was over. The clergy had left; but the Colonel, supported by two brother-officers, remained standing in front of the pit, at the bottom of which he saw still the oaken coffin, wherein lay, already decomposed, the body of his young wife.

He was almost an old man, tall and thin, with white mustaches; and, three years ago, he had married the daughter of a comrade, left an orphan on the death of her father, Colonel Sortis.

The Captain and the Lieutenant, on whom their commanding officer was leaning, attempted to lead him away. He resisted, his eyes full of tears, which he heroically held back, and murmuring, "No, no, a little while longer!" he persisted in remaining there, his legs bending under him, at the side of that pit, which seemed to him bottomless, an abyss into which had fallen his heart and his life, all that he held dear on earth.

Suddenly, General Ormont came up, seized the Colonel by the arm, and dragging him from the spot almost by force, said: "Come, come, my old comrade! you must not remain here."

The Colonel thereupon obeyed, and went back to his quarters. As he opened the door of his study, saw a letter on the table, when he took it in his hands, he was near falling with surprise and emotion: he recognized his wife's handwriting. And the letter bore the postmark and the date of the same day. He tore open the envelope and read:

"Father: Permit me to call you still father as in days gone by. When you receive this letter, I shall be dead, and under the clay. Therefore, perhaps, you may forgive me.

"I do not want to excite your pity or to extenuate my sin. I only want to tell the entire and complete truth, with all the sincerity of a woman who, in an hour's time, is going to kill herself.

"When you married me through generosity, I gave myself to you through gratitude, and I loved you with all my girlish heart. I loved you as I loved my own father — almost as much; and one day, while

I sat on your knee, and you were kissing me, I called you 'Father' in spite of myself. It was a cry of the heart, instinctive, spontaneous. Indeed, you were to me a father, nothing but a father. You laughed, and you said to me, 'Address me always in that way, my child; it gives me pleasure.'

"We came to the city; and—forgive me, father —I fell in love. Ah! I resisted long, well, nearly two years—and then I yielded, I sinned, I became a fallen woman.

"And as to him? You will never guess who he is. I am easy enough about that matter, since there were a dozen officers always around me and with me, whom you called my twelve constellations.

"Father, do not seek to know him, and do not hate him. He only did what any man, no matter whom, would have done in his place, and then I am sure that he loved me, too, with all his heart.

"But listen! One day we had an appointment in the isle of Bécasses—you know the little isle, close to the mill. I had to get there by swimming, and he had to wait for me in a thicket, and then to remain there till nightfall so that nobody should see him going away. I had just met him when the branches opened, and we saw Philippe, your orderly, who had surprised us. I felt that we were lost, and I uttered a great cry. Thereupon he said to me,—he, my lover,—'Go, swim back quietly, my darling, and leave me here with this man.'

"I went away so excited that I was near drowning myself, and I came back to you expecting that something dreadful was about to happen.

"An hour later, Philippe said to me in a low tone,

in the lobby outside the drawing-room where I met him: 'I am at Madame's orders, if she has any letters to give me.' Then I knew that he had sold himself, and that my lover had bought him.

"I gave him some letters, in fact—all my letters—he took them away, and brought me back the answers.

"This lasted about two months. We had confidence in him, as you had confidence in him yourself.

"Now, father, here is what happened. One day, in the same isle which I had to reach by swimming, but this time alone, I found your orderly. This man had been waiting for me; and he informed me that he was going to reveal everything about us to you, and deliver to you letters which he had kept, stolen, if I did not yield to his desires.

"Oh! father, father, I was filled with fear—a cowardly fear, an unworthy fear, a fear above all of you, who had been so good to me, and whom I had deceived—fear on his account too—you would have killed him—for myself also perhaps! I cannot tell; I was mad, desperate; I thought of once more buying this wretch, who loved me, too—how shameful!

"We are so weak, we women, we lose our heads more easily than you do. And then, when a woman once falls, she always falls lower and lower. Did I know what I was doing? I understood only that one of you two and I were going to die—and I gave myself to this brute.

"You see, father, that I do not seek to excuse myself. Then, then—then what I should have foreseen happened—he had the better of me again and again,

when he wished, by terrifying me. He, too, has been my lover, like the other, every day. Is not this abominable? And what punishment, father?

"So then it is all over with me. I must die. While I lived, I could not confess such a crime to you. Dead, I dare everything. I could not do otherwise than die—nothing could have washed me clean—I was too polluted. I could no longer love or be loved. It seemed to me that I stained everyone by merely allowing my hand to be touched.

"Presently I am going to take my bath, and I will never come back. This letter for you will go to my lover. It will reach him when I am dead, and without anyone knowing anything about it, he will forward it to you, accomplishing my last wishes. And you shall read it on your return from the cemetery.

"Adieu, father! I have no more to tell you. Do whatever you wish, and forgive me."

The Colonel wiped his forehead, which was covered with perspiration. His coolness, the coolness of days when he had stood on the field of battle suddenly came back to him. He rang.

A manservant made his appearance. "Send in Philippe to me," said the Colonel. Then he opened the drawer of his table.

The man entered almost immediately—a big soldier with red mustaches, a malignant look, and a cunning eye.

The Colonel looked him straight in the face.

"You are going to tell me the name of my wife's lover."

"But, my Colonel—"

The officer snatched his revolver out of the half-open drawer.

"Come! quick! You know I do not jest!"

"Well—my Colonel—it is Captain Saint-Albert."

Scarcely had he pronounced this name when a flame flashed between his eyes, and he fell on his face, his forehead pierced by a ball.

JOSEPH

THEY were both of them drunk, quite drunk, tiny Baroness Andrée de la Fraisières and little Countess Noemi de Gardens. They had dined alone together, in the large room facing the sea. The soft breeze of a summer evening blew in at the open window, soft and fresh at the same time, a breeze that smelled of the sea. The two young women, stretched at length in their lounging chairs, sipped their Chartreuse as they smoked their cigarettes, talking most confidentially, telling each other details which nothing but this charming intoxication could have permitted their pretty lips to utter.

Their husbands had returned to Paris that afternoon, leaving them alone in that little watering-place which they had chosen so as to avoid those gallant marauders who are constantly encountered at fashionable seaside resorts. As they were absent for five days in the week, they objected to country excursions, luncheons on the grass, swimming lessons, and those

sudden familiarities which spring up in the idle life of similar resorts. To them Dieppe, Etretat, Trouville seemed places to be avoided, and they had rented a house which had been built and abandoned by an eccentric individual in the valley of Roqueville, near Fécamp, and there they buried their wives for the whole summer.

The two ladies were drunk. Not knowing what to hit upon to amuse themselves, the little Baroness had suggested a good dinner and champagne. To begin with, they had found great amusement in cooking this dinner themselves; then they had eaten it merrily, and had imbibed freely, in order to allay the thirst excited by the heat of the fire. Now they were chattering and talking nonsense, from time to time gently moistening their throats with Chartreuse. In fact they did not in the least know any longer what they were saying.

The Countess, with her feet in the air on the back of a chair, was further gone than her friend.

"To complete an evening like this," she said, "we ought to have a gallant apiece. Had I foreseen this some time ago, I would have sent to Paris for two men I know, and would have let you have one."

"I can always find one," the other replied; "I could have one this very evening, if I wished."

"What nonsense! At Roqueville, my dear? It would have to be some peasant, then."

"No, not altogether."

"Well, tell me all about it."

"What do you want me to tell you?"

"About your lover."

"My dear, I do not want to live without being loved, for I should fancy I was dead if I were not loved."

"So should I."

"Is not that so?"

"Yes. Men cannot understand it! And especially our husbands!"

"No, not in the least. How can you expect it to be different? The love which we want is made up of being spoiled, of gallantries, and of pretty words and actions. That is the nourishment of our hearts; it is indispensable to our life, indispensable, indispensable."

"True, dear."

"I must feel that somebody is thinking of me, always, everywhere. When I go to sleep and when I wake up, I must know that somebody loves me somewhere, that I am being dreamed of, longed for. Without that, I should be wretched, wretched! Oh! yes, unhappy enough to do nothing but cry."

"I am just the same."

"You must remember that anything else is impossible. After a husband has been nice for six months, or a year, or two years, he usually degenerates into a brute, yes, a regular brute. He won't put himself out for anything, but shows his real self; he makes a scene on the slightest provocation, and sometimes without any provocation whatever. One cannot love a man with whom one lives constantly."

"That is quite true."

"Isn't it? What was I saying? I cannot in the least remember?"

"You were saying that all husbands are brutes!"

"Yes, brutes. All of them."

"That is true."

"And then?"

"What do you mean?"

"What was I saying just then?"

"I don't know, because you did not say it!"

"But I had something to tell you."

"Oh! yes; well, go on."

"Oh! I have got it."

"Well, I am listening."

"I was telling you that I can find lovers everywhere."

"How do you manage it?"

"Like this. Now follow me carefully. When I get to some fresh place, I take notes and make my choice."

"You make your choice?"

"Yes, of course I do. First of all, I take notes. I ask questions. Above all, a man must be discreet, rich, and generous; is not that so?"

"Quite true!"

"And then he must please me, as a man."

"Of course."

"Then I bait the hook for him."

"Bait the hook?"

"Yes, just as one does to catch fish. Have you never fished with a hook and line?"

"No, never."

"You've lost some fun, then; it is very amusing, and besides that, instructive. Well, then, I bait the hook."

"How do you do it?"

"How dense you are. Don't we catch the men we want to catch, without their having any choice?

And they really think that they choose — the fools — but it is we who choose — always. Just think, when one is not ugly, or stupid, as is the case with us, all men run after us, all — without exception. We look them over from morning till night, and when we have selected one, we fish for him."

"But that does not tell me how you do it."

"How I do it! Why, I do nothing; I allow myself to be looked at, that is all."

"Only allow yourself to be looked at?"

"Why yes; that is quite enough. When you have allowed yourself to be looked at several times, a man immediately thinks you the most lovely, the most seductive of women, and then he begins to make love to you. You give him to understand that he is not bad looking, without actually saying anything to him, of course, and he falls in love, like a log. You have him fast, and it lasts a longer or a shorter time, according to his qualities."

"And do you catch all whom you please like that?"

"Nearly all."

"Oh! So there are some who resist?"

"Sometimes."

"Why?"

"Oh! A man is a Joseph for three reasons: First, because he is in love with another woman; secondly, because he is excessively timid, or thirdly, because he is — how shall I say it? — incapable of carrying out the conquest of a woman to the end."

"Oh! my dear! Do you really believe —"

"I am sure of it. There are many of this latter class, many, many, many more than people think.

Oh! they look just like everybody else — they strut like peacocks. No, when I said peacocks, I made a mistake, for they have not a peacock's virility."

"Oh! my dear!"

"As to the timid, they are sometimes unspeakably stupid. They are the sort of men who ought not to undress themselves, even when they are going to bed alone, where there is a looking-glass in the room. With them, one must be energetic, make use of looks, and squeeze their hands, and even that is useless sometimes. They never know how or where to begin. When one faints in their presence — as a last resource — they try to bring you round; and if you do not recover your senses immediately they go and get assistance.

"For myself I confess to a preference for other women's lovers. I carry them by assault at the point of the bayonet, my dear!"

"That is all very well, but when there are no men, as in this place, for instance?"

"I find them!"

"You find them. But where?"

"Everywhere. But that reminds me of my story.

"Now listen. Just two years ago my husband made me pass the summer on his estate at Bougrolles. There was nothing there — you know what I mean, nothing, nothing, nothing whatever! In the neighboring country houses there were a few disgusting boors, men who cared for nothing but shooting, and lived in country houses which had not even a bathroom. They were the sort of men who go to bed covered with perspiration, men you can't improve,

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AFTER THE ORIGINAL DRAWING BY JULIEN DAMAZY.

"I used to ring for him while my maid was dressing me, to give him orders, and [illegible] as well [illegible] she was undressing me."

because their daily lives are dirty. Now just guess what I did!"

"I cannot possibly."

"Ha! ha! ha! I had just been reading a number of George Sand's novels which exalt the man of the people, novels in which the workmen are sublime, and the men of the world are criminals. In addition to this I had seen "Ruy Blas" the winter before, and it had impressed me very much. Well, one of our farmers had a son, a good-looking young fellow of two-and-twenty who had studied for the priesthood, but had left the seminary in disgust. Well, I took him as footman!"

"Oh! And then? What afterward?"

"Then—then, my dear, I treated him very haughtily, but let him see a good deal of my person. I did not entice this rustic on, I simply inflamed him!"

"Oh! Andrée!"

"Yes, and I enjoyed the fun very much. People say that servants count for nothing! Well he did not count for much. I used to give him his orders every morning while my maid was dressing me, and every evening as well, while she was undressing me."

"Oh! Andrée!"

"My dear, he caught fire like a thatched roof. Then, at meals, I used continually to talk about cleanliness, about taking care of one's person, about baths and shower baths, until at the end of a fortnight he bathed in the river morning and night, and used so much scent as to poison the whole château. I had to forbid him to use perfume, telling him, with furious looks, that men ought never to use any scent but Eau de Cologne."

"Oh! Andrée!"

"Then, I took it into my head to get together a library suitable to the country. I sent for a few hundred moral novels, which I lent to all our peasants, and all my servants. A few books — a few poetical books, such as excite the minds of schoolboys and schoolgirls, had found their way into my collection. These, I gave to my footman. That taught him life — a funny sort of life."

"Oh! Andrée!"

"Then I grew familiar with him, and used to 'thou'* him. I had given him the name of Joseph. My dear, he was in a terrible state. He got as thin as a barn-door cock, and rolled his eyes like an idiot. I was extremely amused; it was one of the most delightful summers I ever spent."

"And then?"

"Then? Oh! yes, one day when my husband was away from home, I told him to order the basket carriage and to drive me into the woods. It was warm, very warm. There!"

"Oh! Andrée, do tell me all about it. It is so amusing."

"Here, have a glass of Chartreuse, otherwise I shall empty the decanter myself. Well, I felt ill on the road."

"How?"

"You are dense. I told him that I was not feeling well and that he must lay me on the grass, and when I was lying there, I told him I was choking

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* The second person singular is used in French — as in German — among relations and intimate friends, and to servants.

and that he must unlace me. And then when I was unlaced, I fainted."

"Did you go right off?"

"Oh! dear no, not the least."

"Well?"

"Well, I was obliged to remain unconscious for nearly an hour, as he could find no means of bringing me round. But I was very patient, and did not open my eyes."

"Oh! Andrée!" . . .

"And what did you say to him?"

"I? Nothing at all! How was I to know anything, as I was unconscious? I thanked him, and told him to help me into the carriage, and he drove me back to the château; but he nearly upset us in turning into the gate!"

"Oh! Andrée! And is that all?"

"That is all."

"You did not faint more than that once?"

"Only once, of course! I did not want to take such a fellow for my lover."

"Did you keep him long after that?"

"Yes, of course. I have him still. Why should I have sent him away? I had nothing to complain of."

"Oh! Andrée! And is he in love with you still?"

"Of course he is."

"Where is he?"

The little Baroness put out her hand to the wall and touched the electric bell. The door opened almost immediately, and a tall footman came in who diffused a scent of Eau de Cologne all round him.

"Joseph," said the Baroness to him, "I am afraid I am going to faint; send my lady's maid to me."

The man stood motionless, like a soldier before his officer, looking ardently at his mistress, who continued: "Be quick, you great idiot, we are not in the woods to-day, and Rosalie will attend to me better than you can." He turned on his heels and went, and the Countess asked nervously: "What shall you say to your maid?"

"I shall tell her what we have been doing! No, I shall merely get her to unlace me; it will relieve my chest, for I can scarcely breathe. I am drunk, my dear—so drunk that I should fall, if I were to get up from my chair."

REGRET

MONSIEUR SAVEL, who was called in Mantes "Father Savel," had just risen from bed. He wept. It was a dull autumn day; the leaves were falling. They fell slowly in the rain, resembling another rain, but heavier and slower. M. Savel was not in good spirit. He walked from the fireplace to the window, and from the window to the fireplace. Life has its somber days. It will no longer have any but somber days for him now, for he has reached the age of sixty-two. He is alone, an old bachelor, with nobody about him. How sad it is to die alone, all alone, without the disinterested affection of anyone!

He pondered over his life, so barren, so void. He recalled the days gone by, the days of his infancy, the house, the house of his parents; his college days, his follies, the time of his probation in Paris, the illness of his father, his death. He then returned to live with his mother. They lived together, the young man and the old woman, very quietly, and desired

nothing more. At last the mother died. How sad a thing is life! He has lived always alone, and now, in his turn, he too, will soon be dead. He will disappear, and that will be the finish. There will be no more of Savel upon the earth. What a frightful thing! Other people will live, they will live, they will laugh. Yes, people will go on amusing themselves, and he will no longer exist! Is it not strange that people can laugh, amuse themselves, be joyful under that eternal certainty of death! If this death were only probable, one could then have hope; but no, it is inevitable, as inevitable as that night follows the day.

If, however, his life had been complete! If he had done something; if he had had adventures, grand pleasures, successes, satisfaction of some kind or another. But now, nothing. He had done nothing, never anything but rise from bed, eat, at the same hours, and go to bed again. And he has gone on like that to the age of sixty-two years. He had not even taken unto himself a wife, as other men do. Why? Yes, why was it that he was not married? He might have been, for he possessed considerable means. Was it an opportunity which had failed him? Perhaps! But one can create opportunities. He was indifferent; that was all. Indifference had been his greatest drawback, his defect, his vice. How some men miss their lives through indifference! To certain natures, it is so difficult to get out of bed, to move about, to take long walks, to speak, to study any question.

He had not even been in love. No woman had reposed on his bosom, in a complete abandon of

love. He knew nothing of this delicious anguish of expectation, of the divine quivering of the pressed hand, of the ecstasy of triumphant passion.

What superhuman happiness must inundate your heart when lips encounter lips for the first time, when the grasp of four arms makes one being of you, a being unutterably happy, two beings infatuated with each other.

M. Savel was sitting down, his feet on the fender, in his dressing gown. Assuredly his life had been spoiled, completely spoiled. He had however, loved. He had loved secretly, dolorously, and indifferently, just as was characteristic of him in everything. Yes, he had loved his old friend, Madame Saudres, the wife of his old companion, Saudres. Ah! if he had known her as a young girl! But he had encountered her too late; she was already married. Unquestionably he would have asked her hand; that he would! How he had loved her, nevertheless, without respite, since the first day he had set eyes on her!

He recalled, without emotion, all the times he had seen her, his grief on leaving her, the many nights that he could not sleep because of his thinking of her.

In the mornings he always got up somewhat less amorous than in the evening.

Why? Seeing that she was formerly pretty and plump, blond and joyous. Saudres was not the man she would have selected. She was now fifty-two years of age. She seemed happy. Ah! if she had only loved him in days gone by; yes, if she had only loved him! And why should she not have loved

him, he, Savel, seeing that he loved her so much, yes, her, Madame Saudres!

If only she could have divined something — Had she not divined anything, had she not seen anything, never comprehended anything? But then, what would she have thought? If he had spoken what would she have answered?

And Savel asked himself a thousand other things. He reviewed his whole life, seeking to grasp again a multitude of details.

He recalled all the long evenings spent at the house of Saudres, when the latter's wife was young and so charming.

He recalled many things that she had said to him, the sweet intonations of her voice, the little significant smiles that meant so much.

He recalled the walks that the three of them had had, along the banks of the Seine, their lunches on the grass on the Sundays, for Saudres was employed at the subprefecture. And all at once the distinct recollection came to him of an afternoon spent with her in a little plantation on the banks of the river.

They had set out in the morning, carrying their provisions in baskets. It was a bright spring morning, one of those days which inebriate one. Everything smelled fresh, everything seemed happy. The voices of the birds sounded more joyous, and the flapping of their wings more rapid. They had lunch on the grass, under the willow-trees, quite close to the water, which glittered in the sun's rays. The air was balmy, charged with the odors of fresh vegetation; they had drunk the most delicious wines. How pleasant everything was on that day!

After lunch, Saudres went to sleep on the broad of his back, "The best nap he had in his life," said he, when he woke up.

Madame Saudres had taken the arm of Savel, and they had started to walk along the river's bank.

She leaned tenderly on his arm. She laughed and said to him: "I am intoxicated, my friend, I am quite intoxicated." He looked at her, his heart beating rapidly. He felt himself grow pale, hoping that he had not looked too boldly at her, and that the trembling of his hands had not revealed his passion.

She had decked her head with wild flowers and water-lilies, and she had asked him: "Do you not like to see me appear thus?"

As he did not answer—for he could find nothing to say, he should rather have gone down on his knees—she burst out laughing, a sort of discontented laughter which she threw straight in his face, saying: "Great goose, what ails you? You might at least speak!"

He felt like crying, and could not even yet find a word to say.

All these things came back to him now, as vividly as on the day when they took place. Why had she said this to him, "Great goose, what ails you? You might at least speak!"

And he recalled how tenderly she had leaned on his arm. And in passing under a shady tree he had felt her ear leaning against his cheek, and he had tilted his head abruptly, for fear that she had not meant to bring their flesh into contact.

When he had said to her: "Is it not time to return?" she darted at him a singular look. "Certainly,"

she said, "certainly," regarding him at the same time, in a curious manner. He had not thought of anything then; and now the whole thing appeared to him quite plain.

"Just as you like, my friend. If you are tired let us go back."

And he had answered: "It is not that I am fatigued; but Saudres has perhaps waked up now."

And she had said: "If you are afraid of my husband's being awake, that is another thing. Let us return."

In returning she remained silent and leaned no longer on his arm. Why?

At that time it had never occurred to him to ask himself, "Why." Now he seemed to apprehend something that he had not then understood.

What was it?

M. Savel felt himself blush, and he got up at a bound, feeling thirty years younger, believing that he now understood Madame Saudres then to say, "I love you."

Was it possible? That suspicion which had just entered into his soul, tortured him. Was it possible that he could not have seen, not have dreamed?"

Oh! if that could be true, if he had rubbed against such good fortune without laying hold of it!

He said to himself: "I wish to know. I cannot remain in this state of doubt. I wish to know!" He put on his clothes quickly, dressed in hot haste. He thought: "I am sixty-two years of age, she is fifty-eight; I may ask her that now without giving offense."

He started out.

The Saudres' house was situated on the other side of the street, almost directly opposite his own. He went up to it, knocked, and a little servant came to open the door.

"You there at this hour, M. Savel? Has some accident happened to you?"

M. Savel responded:

"No, my girl; but go and tell your mistress that I want to speak to her at once."

"The fact is, Madame is preparing her stock of pear-jams for the winter, and she is standing in front of the fire. She is not dressed, as you may well understand."

"Yes, but go and tell her that I wish to see her on an important matter."

The little servant went away and Savel began to walk, with long, nervous strides, up and down the drawing-room. He did not feel himself the least embarrassed, however. Oh! he was merely going to ask her something, as he would have asked her about some cooking receipt, and that was: "Do you know that I am sixty-two years of age?"

The door opened and Madame appeared. She was now a gross woman, fat and round, with full cheeks, and a sonorous laugh. She walked with her arms away from her body, and her sleeves tucked up to the shoulders, her bare arms all smeared with sugar juice. She asked, anxiously:

"What is the matter with you, my friend; you are not ill, are you?"

"No, my dear friend; but I wish to ask you one thing, which to me is of the first importance, some-

thing which is torturing my heart, and I want you to promise that you will answer me candidly."

She laughed, "I am always candid. Say on."

"Well, then. I have loved you from the first day I ever saw you. Can you have any doubt of this?"

She responded laughing, with something of her former tone of voice:

"Great goose! what ails you? I knew it well from the very first day!"

Savel began to tremble. He stammered out: "You knew it? Then—"

He stopped.

She asked:

"Then? What?"

He answered:

"Then—what would you think?—what—what—what would you have answered?"

She broke forth into a peal of laughter, which made the sugar juice run off the tips of her fingers on to the carpet.

"I? But you did not ask me anything. It was not for me to make a declaration."

He then advanced a step toward her.

"Tell me—tell me— You remember the day when Saudres went to sleep on the grass after lunch—when we had walked together as far as the bend of the river, below—"

He waited, expectantly. She had ceased to laugh, and looked at him, straight in the eyes.

"Yes, certainly, I remember it."

He answered, shivering all over.

"Well,—that day—if I had been—if I had been—enterprising—what would you have done?"

She began to laugh as only a happy woman can laugh, who has nothing to regret, and responded frankly, in a voice tinged with irony:

"I would have yielded, my friend."

She then turned on her heels and went back to her jam-making.

Savel rushed into the street, cast down, as though he had encountered some great disaster. He walked with giant strides, through the rain, straight on, until he reached the river, without thinking where he was going. When he reached the bank he turned to the right and followed it. He walked a long time, as if urged on by some instinct. His clothes were running with water, his hat was crushed in, as soft as a piece of rag and dripping like a thatched roof. He walked on, straight in front of him. At last, he came to the place where they had lunched so long, long ago, the recollection of which had tortured his heart. He sat down under the leafless trees, and he wept.

THE DEAF-MUTE

MY DEAR friend, you ask me why I do not return to Paris; you will be astonished, and almost angry, I suppose, when I give you the reason, which will without doubt be revolting to you: "Why should a hunter return to Paris at the height of the woodcock season?"

Certainly I understand and like life in the city very well, that life which leads from the chamber to the sidewalk; but I prefer a freer life, the rude life of the hunter in autumn.

In Paris, it seems to me that I am never out of doors; for, in fact, the streets are only great, common apartments without a ceiling. Is one in the air between two walls, his feet upon stone or wooden pavement, his view shut in everywhere by buildings, without any horizon of verdure, fields, or woods? Thousands of neighbors jostle you, push you, salute you, and talk with you; but the fact of receiving water upon an

umbrella when it rains is not sufficient to give me the impression or the sensation of space.

Here, I perceive clearly and deliciously the difference between in doors and out. But it was not of that that I wish to speak to you.

Well, then, the woodcock are flying.

And it is necessary to tell you that I live in a great Norman house, in a valley, near a little river, and that I hunt nearly every day.

Other days, I read; I even read things that men in Paris have not the time to become acquainted with; very serious things, very profound, very curious, written by a brave, scholarly genius, a foreigner who has spent his life studying the subject and observing the facts relative to the influence of the functions of our organs upon our intelligence.

But I was speaking to you of woodcock.

My two friends, the D'Orgemol brothers, and myself remain here during the hunting season awaiting the first frost. Then, when it freezes, we set out for their farm in Cannetot, near Fécamp, because there is a delicious little wood there, a divine wood, where every woodcock that flies comes to lodge.

You know the D'Orgemols, those two giants, those Normans of ancient times, those two males of the old, powerful conquering race which invaded France, took England and kept it, established itself on every coast of the world, made towns everywhere, passed like a flood over Sicily, creating there an admirable art, struck down kings, pillaged the proudest cities, matched popes in their priestly tricks and ridiculed them, more sly than the Italian pontiffs themselves, and above all, left children in all the beds

of the world. These D'Orgemols are two Normans of the best stamp, and are all Norman—voice, accent, mind, blond hair, and eyes which are the color of the sea.

When we are together we talk the patois, we live, think, and act in Norman, we become Norman landowners, more peasants than farmers.

For two weeks now, we have been waiting for woodcock. Every morning, Simon, the elder, will say: "Hey! Here's the wind coming round to the east, and it's going to freeze. In two days they will be here."

The younger, Gaspard, more exact, waits for the frost to come before he announces it.

But, last Thursday he entered my room at dawn, crying out:

"It has come! The earth is all white. Two days more and we shall go to Cannetot."

Two days later, in fact, we do set out for Cannetot. Certainly you would have laughed to see us. We take our places in a strange sort of hunting wagon that my father had constructed long ago. Constructed is the only word that I can use in speaking of this monstrous carriage, or rather this earthquake on wheels. There was room for everything inside: a place for provisions, a place for the guns, place for the trunks, and places of clear space for the dogs. Everything is sheltered except the men, perched on seats as high as a third story, and all this supported by four gigantic wheels. One mounted as best he could, making his feet, hands, and even his teeth serve him for the occasion, for there was no step to give access to the edifice.

Now, the two D'Orgemols and myself scaled this mountain, clothed like Laplanders. We have on sheepskins, wear enormous, woolen stockings outside our pantaloons, and gaiters outside our woolen stockings; we also have some black fur caps and white fur gloves. When we are installed, John, my servant, throws us our three terriers, Pif, Paf, and Moustache. Pif belongs to Simon, Paf to Gaspard, and Moustache to me. They look like three crocodiles covered with hair. They are long, low, and crooked, with bent legs, and so hairy that they have the look of a yellow thicket. Their eyes can scarcely be seen under their eyebrows, or their teeth through their beards. One could never shut them into the rolling kennels of the carriage. Each one puts his own dog under his feet to keep him warm.

And now we are off, shivering abominably. It is cold, and freezing hard. We are contented. Toward five o'clock we arrive. The farmer, master Picot, is expecting us, waiting before the door. He is also a jolly fellow, not tall, but round, squat, vigorous as a bulldog, sly as a fox, always laughing, always contented, knowing how to make money out of all of us.

It is a great festival for him when the woodcock arrives. The farm is large, and on it an old building set in an apple orchard, surrounded by four rows of beech-trees, which battle against the winds from the sea all the year.

We enter the kitchen where a bright fire is burning in our honor. Our table is set against the high chimney, where a large chicken is turning and roasting before the clear flame, and whose gravy is running into an earthen dish beneath.

The farmer's wife salutes us, a tall, quiet woman, wholly occupied with the cares of her house, her head full of accounts, the price of grain, of poultry, of mutton, and beef. She is an orderly woman, set and severe, known for her worth in the neighborhood.

At the end of the kitchen is set the long table where all the farm hands, drivers, laborers, stable-boys, shepherds, and woman servants sit down. They eat in silence under the active eye of the mistress, watching us dine with master Picot, who says witty things to make us laugh. Then, when all her servants are fed, Madame Picot takes her repast alone at one corner of the table, a rapid and frugal repast, watching the serving maid meanwhile. On ordinary days she dines with all the rest.

We all three sleep, the D'Orgemols and myself, in a bare, white room, whitewashed with lime, containing only our three beds, three chairs, and three basins.

Gaspard always wakes first and sounds the echoing watchword. In half an hour everybody is ready, and we set out with master Picot who hunts with us.

Mr. Picot prefers me to his masters. Why? Without doubt because I am not his master. So we two reach the woods by the right, while the two brothers come to the attack by the left. Simon has the care of the dogs, all three attached to the end of a rope.

For we are not hunting woodcock but the wolf. We are convinced that it is better to find the woodcock than to seek it. If one falls upon one and kills it, there you are! But when one specially wishes to meet one, he can never quite bring him down. It is truly a beautiful and curious thing, hearing the loud

report of a gun, in the fresh morning air, and then, the formidable voice of Gaspard filling the space as he howls:

"Woodcock— There it is."

As for me, I am sly. When I have killed a woodcock, I cry out: "Wolf!" And then I triumph in my success when we go to a clear place for the midday lunch.

Here we are then, master Picot and I, in the little woods, where the leaves fall with a sweet and continued murmur, with a dry murmur, a little sad, for they are dead. It is cold, a light cold which stings the eyes, the nose, and the ears, and powders with a fine, white moss the limbs of the trees and the brown, plowed earth. But there is warmth through all our limbs under the great sheepskin. The sun is gay in the blue air which it warms scarcely at all, but it is gay. It is good to hunt in the woods on fresh mornings in winter.

Down below, a dog is loudly baying. It is Pif. I know his thin voice, but it ceases. Then there is another cry, and then another; and Paf in his turn begins to bark. And what has become of Moustache? Ah! there is a little cry like that of a chicken being strangled! They have stirred up a wolf. Attention, master Picot!

They separate, then approach each other, scatter again, and then return; we follow their unforeseen windings, coming out into little roads, the mind on the alert, finger on the trigger of the gun.

They turn toward the fields again, and we turn also. Suddenly, there is a gray spot, a shadow, crossing the bypath. I aim and fire. The light smoke rises in

the blue air and I perceive under a bush a bit of white hair which moves. Then I shout, with all my force, "Wolf, wolf! There he is!" And I show him to the three dogs, the three hairy crocodiles, who thank me by wagging their tails. Then they go off in search of another.

Master Picot joins me. Moustache begins to yap. The farmer says: "There must be a hare there at the edge of the field."

The moment that I came out of the woods, I perceived, not ten steps from me, enveloped in his immense yellowish mantle and wearing his knitted, woolen cap such as shepherds wear at home, master Picot's herdsman Gargan, the deaf-mute. I said "Good morning," to him, according to our custom, and he raised his hand to salute me. He had not heard my voice, but had seen the motion of my lips.

For fifteen years I had known this shepherd. For fifteen years I had seen him each autumn, on the border, or in the middle of the field, his body motionless, and always knitting in his hands. His flock followed him like a pack of hounds, seeming to obey his eye.

Master Picot now took me by the arm, saying:

"Did you know that the shepherd killed his wife?"

I was stupefied. "What Gargan—the deaf-mute?"

"Yes, this winter, and his case was tried at Rouen. I will tell you about it."

And he led me into the underbrush, for the shepherd knew how to catch words from his master's lips, as if he heard them spoken. He could under-

stand only him; but, watching his face closely, he was no longer deaf; and the master, on the other hand, seemed to divine, like a sorcerer, the meaning of all the mute's pantomime, the gestures of his fingers, the expression of his face, and the motion of his eyes.

Here is his simple story, the various, somber facts as they came to pass:

Gargan was the son of a marl digger, one of those men who go down into the marlpit to extract that kind of soft, dissolving stone, sown under the soil. A deaf-mute by birth, he had been brought up to watch the cows along the ditches by the side of the roads.

Then, picked up by Picot's father, he had become the shepherd on his farm. He was an excellent shepherd, devout, upright, knowing how to find the lost members of his flock, although nobody had taught him anything.

When Picot took the farm, in his turn, Gargan was thirty years old and looked forty. He was tall, thin, and bearded — bearded like a patriarch.

About this time a good woman of the country, Mrs. Martel, died very poor, leaving a girl fifteen years old who was called "Drops," because of her immoderate love for brandy.

Picot took in this ragged waif, employed her in light duties, giving her a home without pay in return for her work. She slept under the barn, in the stable, or the cow-house, upon straw, or on the manure-heap, anywhere, it mattered not where, for they could not give a bed to this barefoot. She slept, then, no matter where, with no matter whom, perhaps with

the plowman or the stable boy. But it happened soon that she gave her attention to the deaf-mute and coupled herself with him in a continued fashion. What united these two miserable beings? How have they understood each other? Had he ever known a woman before this barn rover, he who had never talked with anyone? Was it she who found him in his wheeled hut and seduced him, like an Eve of the rut, at the edge of the road? No one knows. They only know that one day they were living together as husband and wife.

No one was astonished by it, and Picot found it a very natural coupling. But the curate heard of this union without a mass and was angry. He reproached Mrs. Picot, disturbed her conscience, and threatened her with mysterious punishments. What was to be done? It was very simple. They must go and be married at the church and at the mayor's. They had nothing, either one of them: he, not a whole pair of pantaloons, she, not a petticoat of a single kind of cloth. So there was nothing to oppose what the law and religion required. They were united, in an hour, before the mayor and the curate, and believed that all was regulated for the best.

Now, it soon became a joke in the country (pardon the villainous word) to make a deceived husband of this poor Gargan. Before she was married, no one thought of sleeping with "Drops," but now each one wished his turn, for the sake of a laughable story. Everybody went there for a little glass behind the husband's back. The affair made so much noise that even some of the Goderville gentlemen came to see her.

For a half pint "Drops" would furnish the spectacle with no matter whom, in a ditch, behind a wall, anywhere, while the silhouette of the motionless Gargan could be seen knitting a stocking not a hundred feet from there, surrounded by his bleating flock. And they laughed about it enough to make themselves ill, in all the *cafés* of the country. It was the only thing talked of in the evening before the fire; and upon the road, the first thing one would ask:— "Have you paid your drop to 'Drops'?" Everyone knew what that meant.

The shepherd never seemed to see anything. But one day the Poirot boy, of Sasseville, called to Gargan's wife from behind the mill, showing her a full bottle. She understood and ran to him laughing. Now, scarcely were they engaged in their criminal deed when the herdsman fell upon them as if he had come out of a cloud. Poirot fled at full speed, his breeches about his heels, while the deaf-mute, with the cry of a beast, sprang at his wife's throat.

The people working in the fields ran toward them. It was too late; her tongue was black, her eyes were coming out of her head, the blood was flowing from her nose. She was dead.

The shepherd was tried by the Judge at Rouen. As he was a mute, Picot served as interpreter. The details of the affair amused the audience very much. But the farmer had but one idea: his herdsman must be acquitted. And he went about it in earnest.

At first, he related the deaf-mute's whole story, including that of his marriage; then, when he came to the crime, he himself questioned the assassin.

The assemblage was very quiet.

Picot pronounced the words slowly: "Did you know that she had deceived you?" and at the same time he asked the question with his eyes in pantomime.

The other answered "No" with his head.

"Were you asleep in the mill when you surprised her?" And he made a gesture of a man seeing some disgusting thing.

The other answered "Yes" with his head.

Then the farmer, imitating the signs of the mayor who married them, and of the priest who united them in the name of God, asked his servant if he had killed his wife because she was bound to him before men and before heaven.

The shepherd answered "Yes" with his head.

Picot then said to him: "Come, tell us how it happened."

Then the deaf-mute reproduced the whole scene in pantomime. He showed how he was asleep in the mill; that he was awakened by feeling the straw move; that he had watched quietly and had seen the whole thing.

He rose, between the two policemen, and brusquely imitated the obscene movement of the criminal couple entangled before him.

A tumultuous laugh went through the hall, then stopped short; for the herdsman, with haggard eyes, moving his jaw and his great beard as if he had bitten something, with arms extended, and head thrown forward, repeated the terrible action of a murderer who strangles a being.

And he howled frightfully, so excited with anger that one would think he believed he still held her in

his grasp; and the policemen were obliged to seize him and seat him by force in order to calm him.

A great shiver of agony ran through the assembly. Then master Picot, placing his hand upon his servant's shoulder, said simply: "He knows what honor is, this man does."

And the shepherd was acquitted.

As for me, my dear friend, I listened to this adventure to its close, much moved, and have related it to you in gross terms in order not to change the farmer's story. But now there is a report of a gun from the woods, and the formidable voice of Gaspard is heard growling in the wind, like the sound of a cannon:

"Woodcock! There is one."

And this is how I employ my time, watching for the woodcock to pass, while you are also going to the Bois to see the first winter costumes.

MAGNETISM

IT WAS at the close of a dinner-party of men, at the hour of endless cigars and incessant sips of brandy, amid the smoke and the torpid warmth of digestion, and the slight confusion of heads generated by such a quantity of eatables and by the absorption of so many different liquors.

Those present were talking about magnetism, about Donato's tricks, and about Doctor Charcot's experiences. All of a sudden, those men, so sceptical, so happy-go-lucky, so indifferent to religion of every sort, began telling stories about strange occurrences, incredible things which nevertheless had really happened, they contended, falling back into superstitions, beliefs, clinging to these last remnants of the marvelous, becoming devotees to this mystery of magnetism, defending it in the name of science. There was only one person who smiled, a vigorous young fellow, a great pursuer of girls of light behavior, and a hunter also of frisky matrons, in whose mind

there was so much incredulity about everything that he would not even enter upon a discussion of such matters.

He repeated with a sneer:

"Humbug! humbug! humbug! We need not discuss Donato, who is merely a very smart juggler. As for M. Charcot, who is said to be a remarkable man of science, he produces on me the effect of those story-tellers of the school of Edgar Allan Poe, who go mad through constantly reflecting on queer cases of insanity. He has set forth some nervous phenomena, which are unexplained and inexplicable; he makes his way into that unknown region which men explore every day, and not being able to comprehend what he sees, he remembers perhaps too well the explanations of certain mysteries given by priests. Besides, I would like to hear him speaking on these subjects; that would be quite a different thing from your repetition of what he says."

The words of the unbeliever were listened to with a kind of pity, as if he had blasphemed in the midst of an assembly of monks.

One of these gentlemen exclaimed:

"And yet miracles were performed in former days."

But the other replied: "I deny it. Why cannot they be performed any longer?"

Thereupon, each man referred to some fact, or some fantastic presentiment, or some instance of souls communicating with each other across space, or some case of secret influences produced by one being or another. And they asserted, they maintained, that these things had actually occurred, while the sceptic

went on repeating energetically: "Humbug! humbug! humbug!"

At last he rose up, threw away his cigar, and with his hands in his pockets said: "Well, I, too, am going to relate to you two stories, and then I will explain them to you. Here they are:

"In the little village of Etretat, the men, who are all seafaring folk, go every year to Newfoundland to fish for cod. Now, one night the little son of one of these fishermen woke up with a start, crying out that his father was dead. The child was quieted, and again he woke up exclaiming that his father was drowned. A month later the news came that his father had, in fact, been swept off the deck of his smack by a billow. The widow then remembered how her son had awaked and spoken of his father's death. Everyone said it was a miracle, and the affair caused a great sensation. The dates were compared, and it was found that the accident and the dream had very nearly coincided, whence they drew the conclusion that they had happened on the same night and at the same hour. And there is the mystery of magnetism."

The story-teller stopped suddenly.

Thereupon, one of those who had heard him, much affected by the narrative, asked:

"And can you explain this?"

"Perfectly, Monsieur. I have discovered the secret. The circumstance surprised me and even embarrassed me very much; but I, you see, do not believe on principle. Just as others begin by believing, I begin by doubting; and when I don't at all understand, I continue to deny that there can be any telegraphic

communication between souls, certain that my own sagacity will be enough to explain it. Well, I have gone on inquiring into the matter, and I have ended, by dint of questioning all the wives of the absent seamen, in convincing myself that not a week passes without one of themselves or their children dreaming and declaring when they wake that the father was drowned. The horrible and continual fear of this accident makes them always talk about it. Now, if one of these frequent predictions coincides, by a very simple chance, with the death of the person referred to, people at once declare it to be a miracle; for they suddenly lose sight of all the other predictions of misfortune that have remained unconfirmed. I have myself known fifty cases where the persons who made the prediction forgot all about it in a week afterward. But if, in fact, the man was dead, then the recollection of the thing is immediately revived, and people will be ready to believe in the intervention of God, according to some, and in magnetism, according to others."

One of the smokers remarked:

"What you say is right enough; but what about your second story?"

"Oh! my second story is a very delicate matter to relate. It is to myself it happened, and so I don't place any great value on my own view of the matter. One is never a good judge in a case where he is one of the parties concerned. At any rate, here it is:

"Among my acquaintances in society there was a young woman on whom I had never bestowed a thought, whom I had never even looked at attentively, never taken any notice of, as the saying is.

"I classed her among the women of no importance, though she was not quite bad-looking: in fact, she appeared to me to possess eyes, a nose, a mouth, some sort of hair—just a colorless type of countenance. She was one of those beings on whom one only thinks by accident, without taking any particular interest in the individual, and who never excites desire.

"Well, one night, as I was writing some letters by my own fireside before going to bed, I was conscious, in the midst of that train of sensual images that sometimes float before one's brain in moments of idle reverie, while I held the pen in my hand, of a kind of light breath passing into my soul, a little shudder of the heart, and immediately, without reason, without any logical connection of thought, I saw distinctly, saw as if I had touched her, saw from head to foot, uncovered, this young woman for whom I had never cared save in the most superficial manner when her name happened to recur to my mind. And all of a sudden I discovered in her a heap of qualities which I had never before observed, a sweet charm, a fascination that made me languish; she awakened in me that sort of amorous uneasiness which sends you in pursuit of a woman. But I did not remain thinking of her long. I went to bed and was soon asleep. And I dreamed.

"You have all had these strange dreams which render you masters of the impossible, which open to you doors that cannot be passed through, unexpected joys, impenetrable arms!

"Which of us in these agitated, exciting palpitating slumbers, has not held, clasped, embraced, pos-

sessed with an extraordinary acuteness of sensation, the woman with whom our minds were occupied? And have you ever noticed what superhuman delight these good fortunes of dreams bestow upon us? Into what mad intoxication they cast you! With what passionate spasms they shake you! With what infinite, caressing, penetrating tenderness they fill your heart for her whom you hold fainting and hot in that adorable and sensual illusion which seems so like reality!

"All this I felt with unforgetable violence. This woman was mine, so much mine that the pleasant warmth of her skin remained between my fingers, the odor of her skin remained in my brain, the taste of her kisses remained on my lips, the sound of her voice lingered in my ears, the touch of her clasp still clung to my side, and the burning charm of her tenderness still gratified my senses long after my exquisite but disappointing awakening.

"And three times the same night I had a renewal of my dream.

"When the day dawned, she beset me, possessed me, haunted my brain and my flesh to such an extent that I no longer remained one second without thinking of her.

"At last, not knowing what to do, I dressed myself and went to see her. As I went up the stairs to her apartment, I was so much overcome by emotion that I trembled and my heart panted; I was seized with vehement desire from head to foot.

"I entered the apartment. She rose up the moment she heard my name pronounced; and suddenly our eyes met in a fixed look of astonishment.

"I sat down.

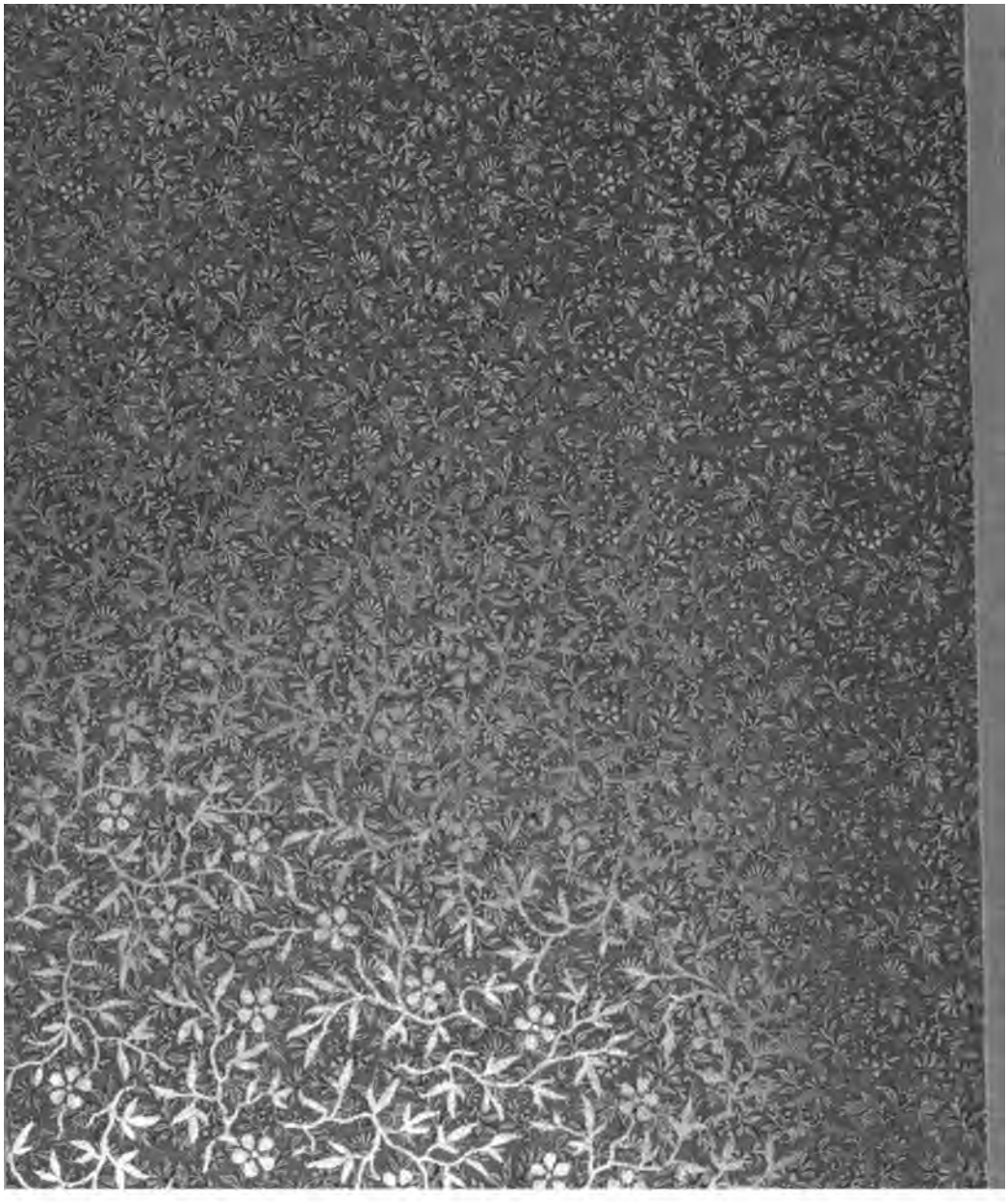
"I uttered in a faltering tone some commonplaces which she seemed not to hear. I did not know what to say or to do. Then, abruptly, I flung myself upon her, seizing her with both arms; and my entire dream was accomplished so quickly, so easily, so madly, that I suddenly began to doubt whether I was really awake. She was, after this, my mistress for two years."

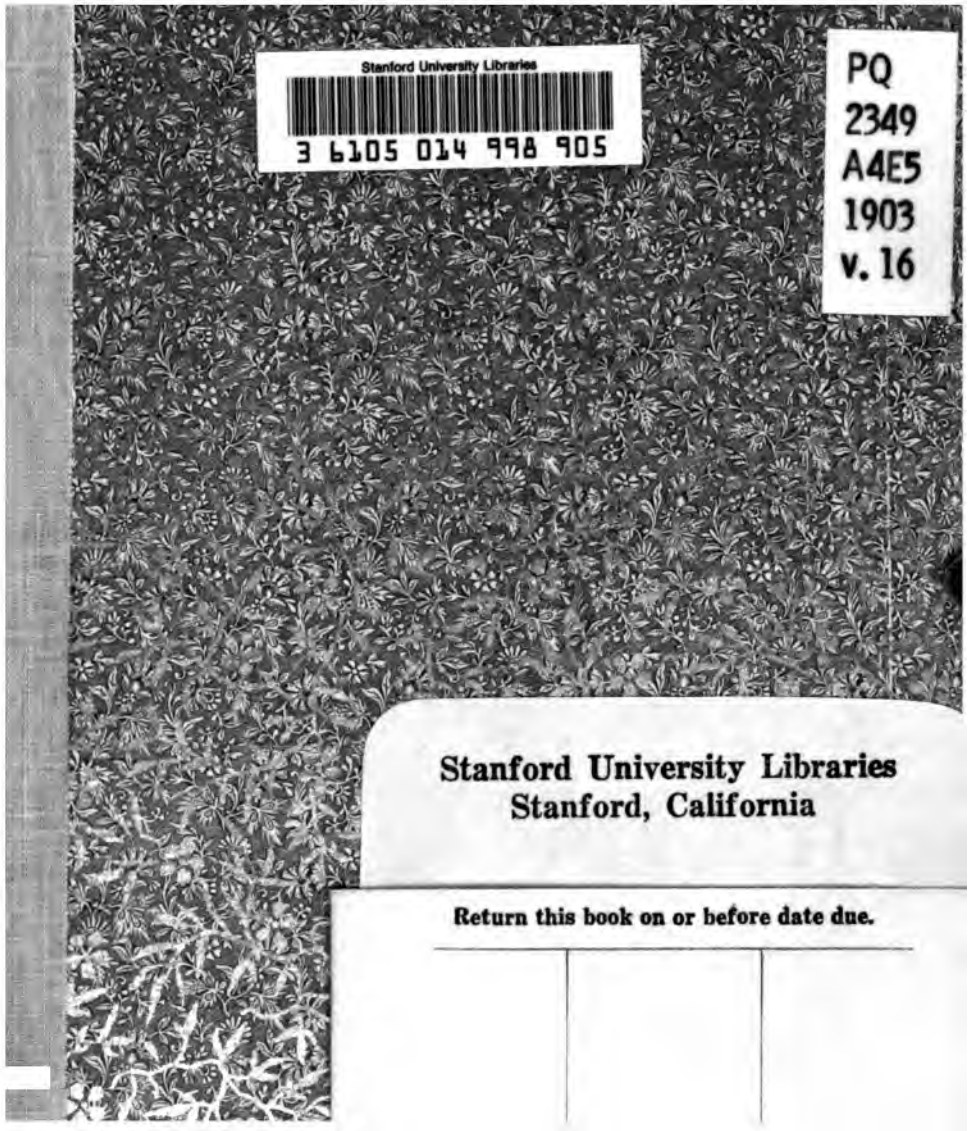
"What conclusion do you draw from it?" said a voice.

The story-teller seemed to hesitate.

"The conclusion I draw from it—well, by Jove, the conclusion is that it was just a coincidence! And, in the next place, who can tell? Perhaps it was some glance of hers which I had not noticed and which came back that night to me—one of those mysterious and unconscious evocations of memory which often bring before us things ignored by our own consciousness, unperceived by our minds!"

"Let that be just as you wish it," said one of his table-companions, when the story was finished, "but if you don't believe in magnetism after that, you are an ungrateful fellow, my dear boy!"

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